

SPECIAL ISSUE

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TO EAT AND
DRINK
IN THE
BIG EASY

THE BOLD,
FRESH
CUISINE OF
THE REPUBLIC
OF GEORGIA

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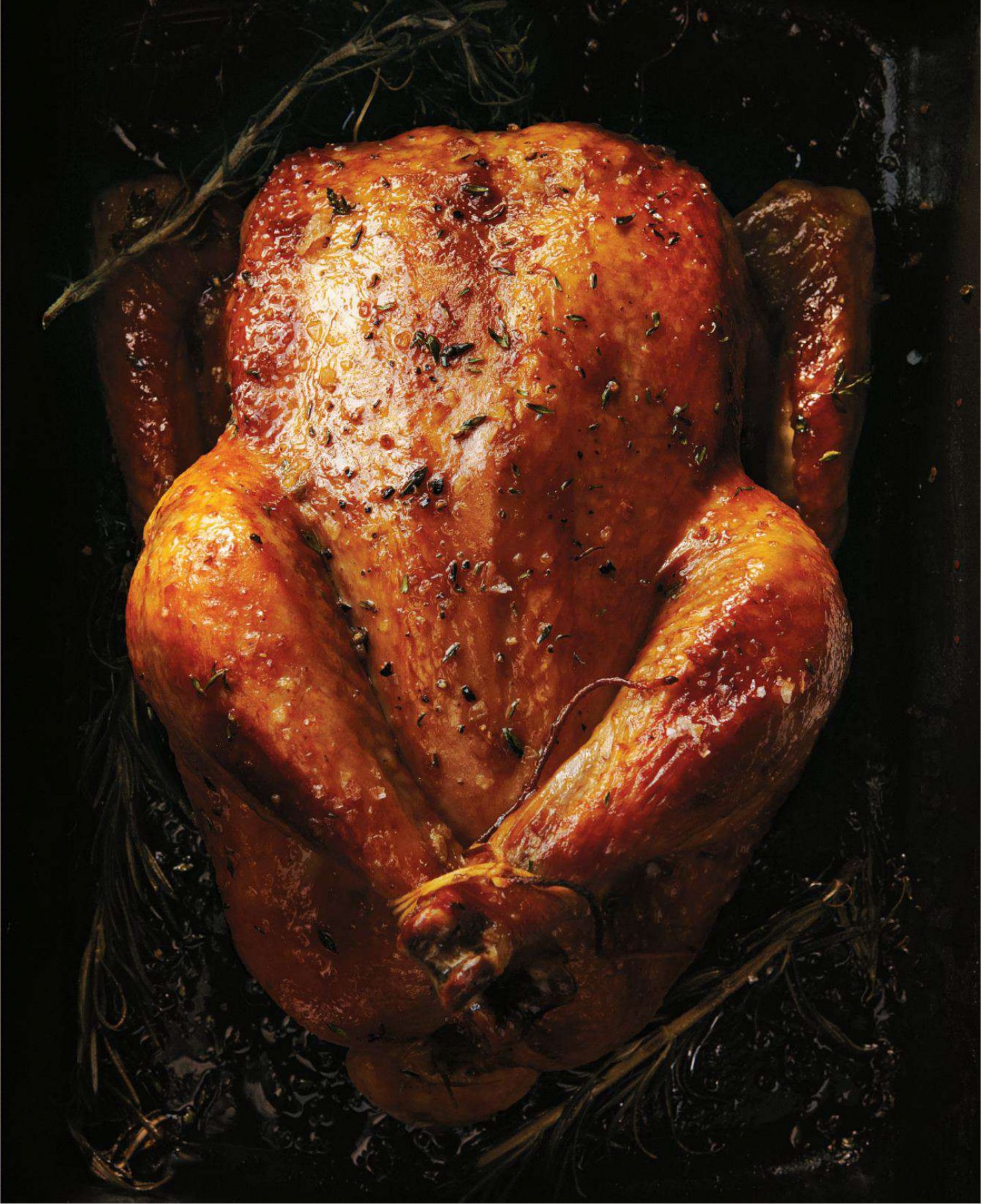
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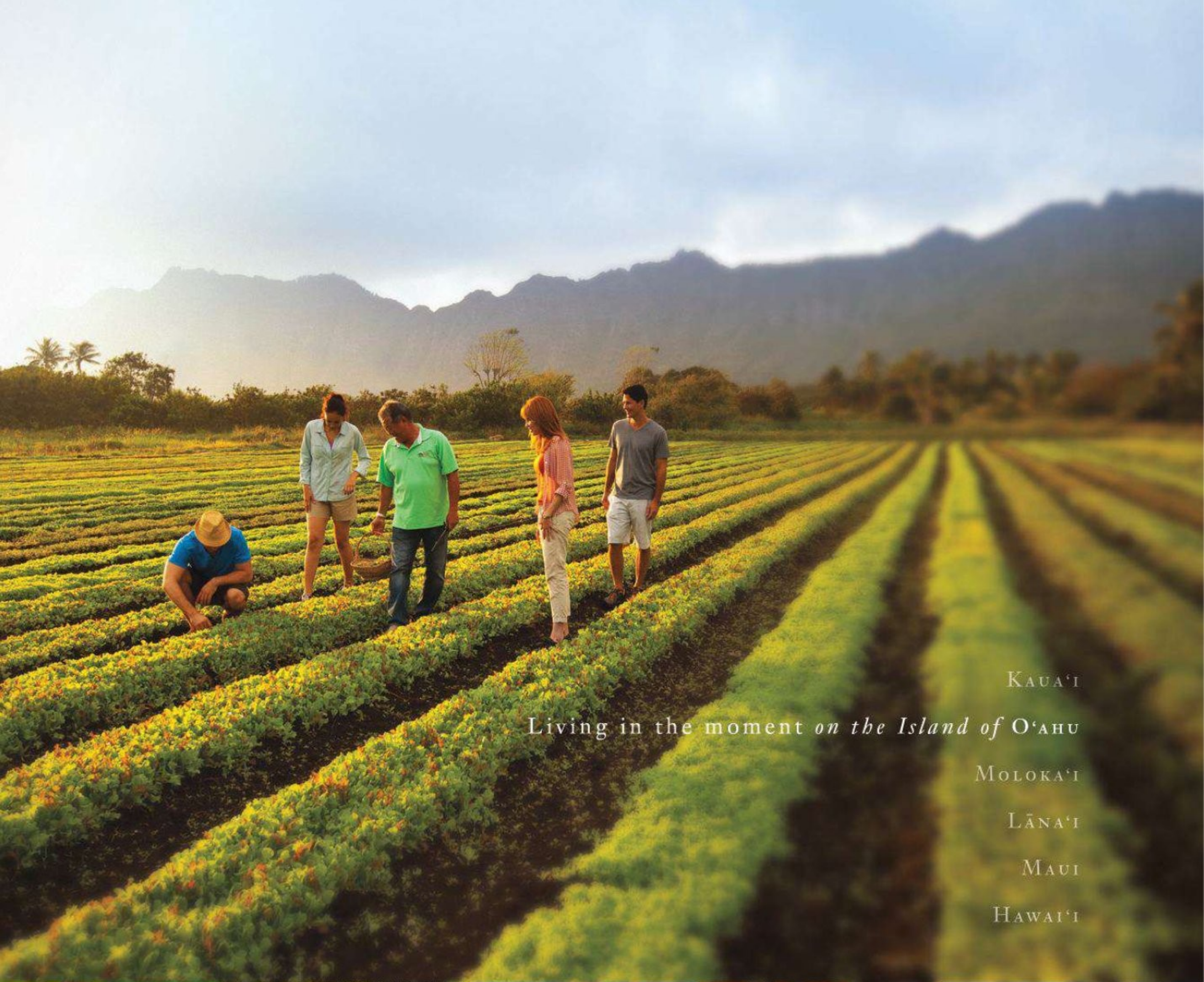
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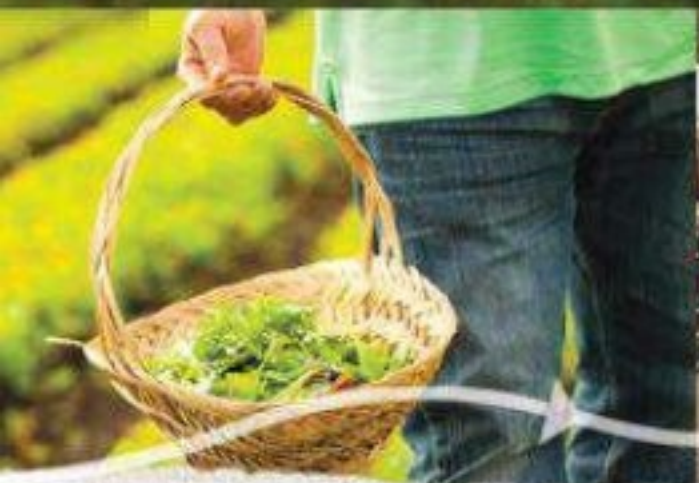
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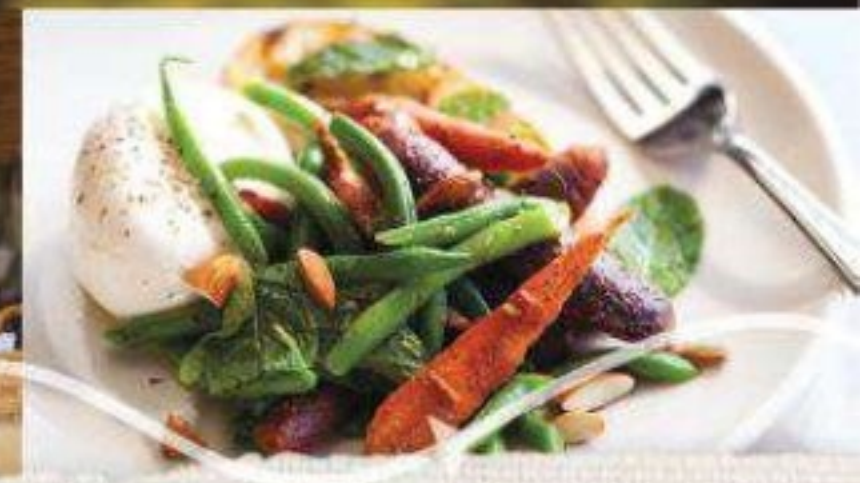
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The Big Easy's classic restaurants still do it right, serving up incomparable oysters Rockefeller, crawfish étouffée, bananas Foster, and other iconic dishes that have made New Orleans a legendary culinary town.

By Lolis Eric Elie

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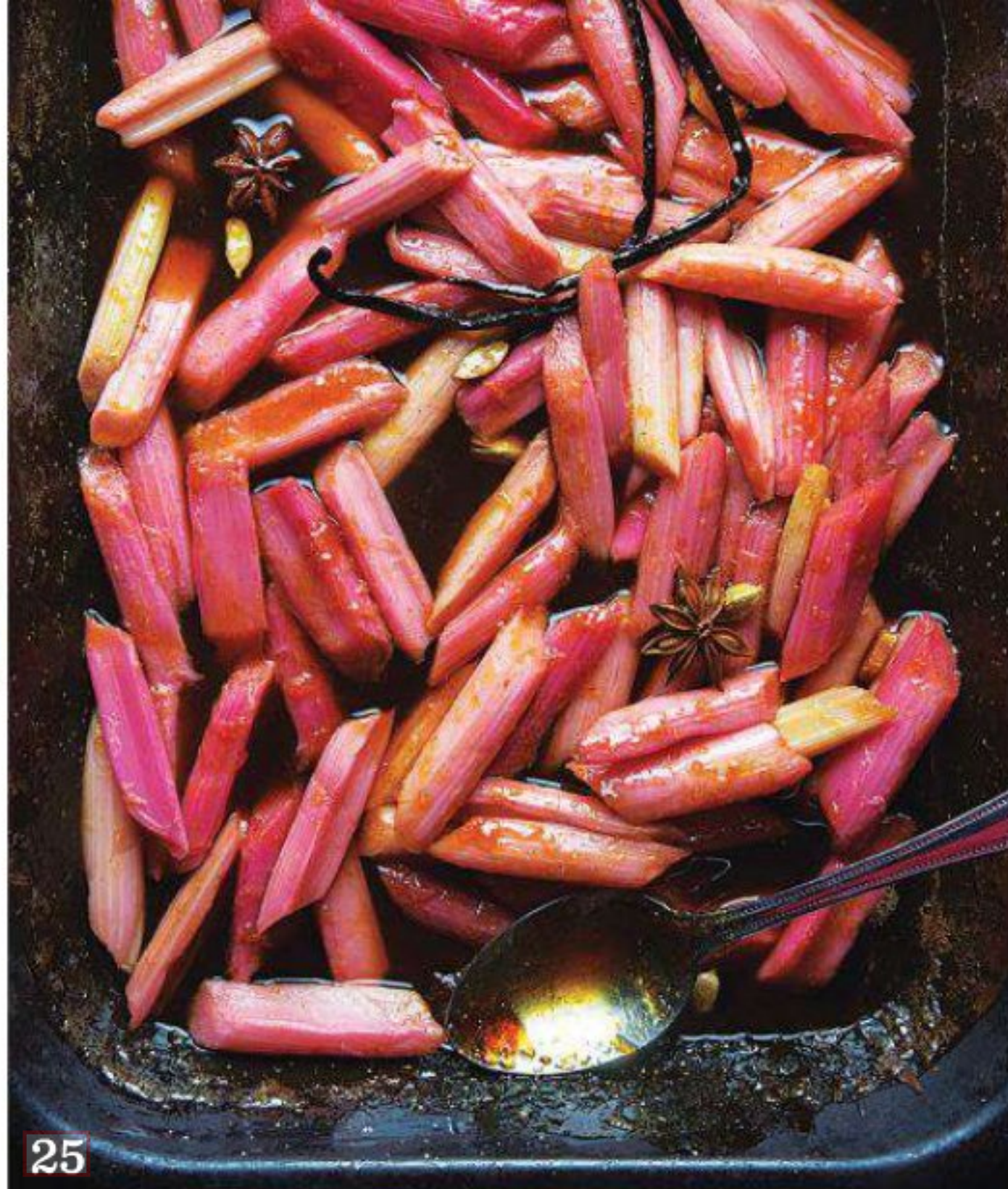
In the Republic of Georgia, epic meals fueled by local wines, heartfelt toasts, and bold, full-flavored foods—fried eggplant with garlicky walnut sauce, slow-cooked veal stew with sour plums, tender cheese-filled dumplings—are part of everyday life. By Karen Shimizu

Cover *Commander's Palace Shrimp & Tasso Henican* PHOTOGRAPH BY TODD COLEMAN

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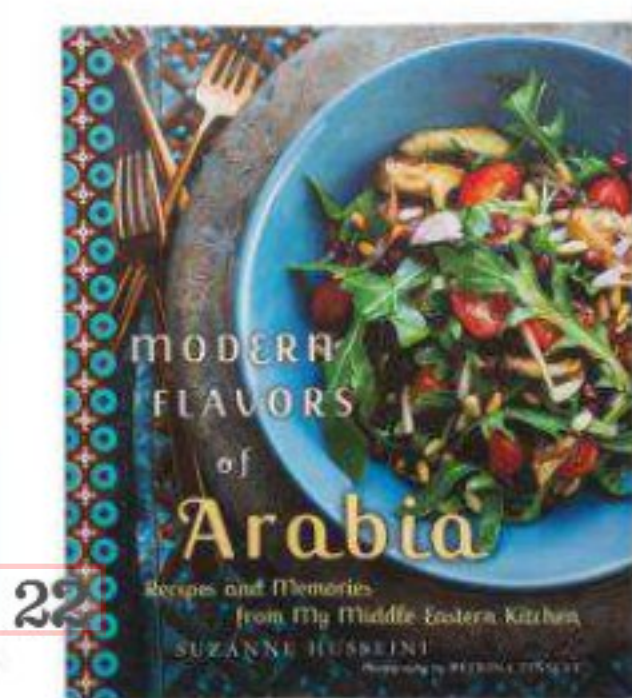
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FIRST



Heart of New Orleans

The city's classic restaurants arouse a lifelong passion

FOR A LONG TIME, this song was the ringtone on my cellphone: "Do you know what it means to miss New Orleans?" The guy who sang it, Louis Armstrong, certainly knew, and since the time I was 14 years old, I have too. That's when my mother, my little sister, and I tagged along on my father's trip to the National Barrel and Drum Association conference, an annual gathering for the industrial packaging trade, held in New Orleans in 1978. My father promptly abandoned us to Sazeracs and business, but we didn't need him; the city's charm chaperoned us through the week. We rode streetcars and paddle steamboats. We crammed in for a jazz show at Preservation Hall. And we ate. I cajoled my mom into the hour-long wait at Brennan's on a Sunday afternoon so that I could sit in the courtyard next to the cascading fountain and eat poached eggs draped in hollandaise.

Then we had dinner at Antoine's Restaurant. I ordered pompano, fished from Lake Pontchartrain and presented in those days grandly encased within a deflating paper balloon—*en papillote*, according to the waiter, who peeled back the parchment to serve it. The mild white filet was moist and buttery and came gilded with crabmeat, and I felt like the world's most

sophisticated teenager. I have never forgotten that dinner and its elegance, nor how graciously I was treated by a waiter who instructed me how to eat it. It was then I knew that my fascination with the trappings of a good meal was leagues deeper than I had previously realized. New Orleans and its oldest, most classic restaurant revealed to me a piece of myself that has shaped my life ever since.

That meal reappeared like magic while I was editing our celebration of New Orleans cuisine for this issue (see page 36); I turned a page in the 1971 book *American Cooking: Creole and Acadian*, a volume in the excellent Time-Life "Foods of the World" series, and there it was, Antoine's pompano *en papillote*, the oven-bronzed, heart-shaped parchment enfolding the filet. Looking at it felt, in a way, like a homecoming.

Of course, the truth is that New Orleans is not my home. But I've returned there many times, as a college student for Mardi Gras, as a reporter after Hurricane Katrina, as a fan at Jazz Fest, and, always, as a diner, for my very first taste of its cuisine left me forever in its thrall. That's what a grand meal can do: capture not only your palate, but also your heart. New Orleans is a city full of those experiences; anyone who's ever eaten there knows what it means to miss it. —BETSY ANDREWS, Executive Editor

Pages 92 and 93 of *American Cooking: Creole and Acadian*, a Time-Life "Foods of the World" book.



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FARE

Whimsy and Wonders from the World of Food, Plus Agenda and More



Good Eggs

For a child growing up in England, a morning staple becomes fantasy food



ONE BREAKFAST FOOD from my youth in Colchester, England, remains, in its simplicity, almost impossible to improve upon: the soft-boiled egg, standing at solemn attention in an eggcup. My eggs were prepared by Mrs. Szymbra, a member of the village church where my father served as minister. She and her husband, a Polish immigrant named Roman, often had us over for breakfast, where, along with

eggs, they occasionally served fresh jelly donuts. Despite the sweetness of the latter, I remained most fascinated by the former. As Mrs. Szymbra lowered the eggs into her pot of swiftly boiling water, I was sent to the cupboard to select an eggcup.

The Szymbras, as it turned out, were committed practitioners of the gentle madness of eggcup collecting known as pocillovy, a term derived from the Latin words *pocillum*,



Collectible eggcups come in hundreds of shapes, sizes, and, occasionally, animal forms.

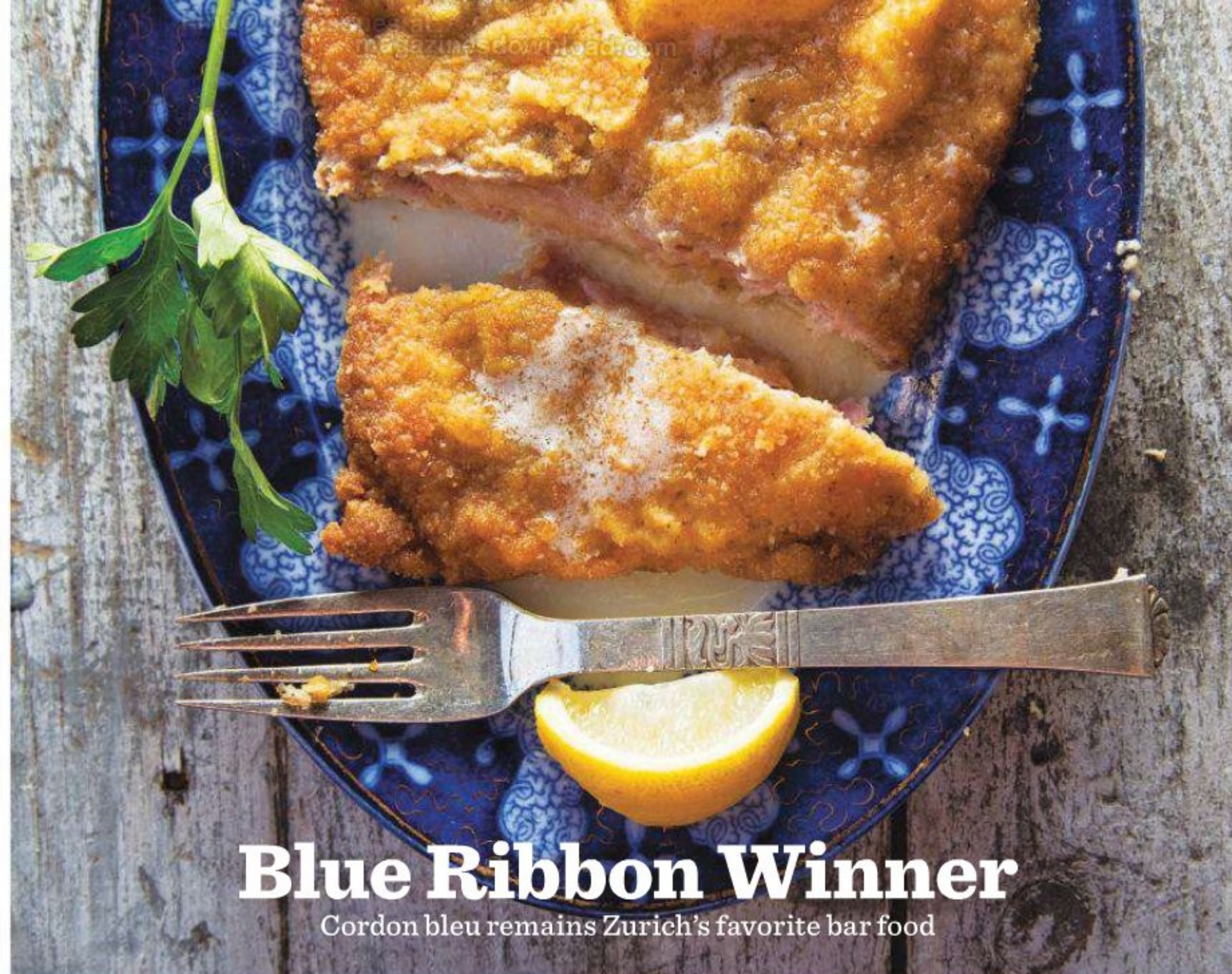
which means small cup, and *ovum*, meaning egg. Because of this, their cupboards contained virtual Narnias of eggcups in porcelain, pewter, plastic, and humble clay. While eggcups date back to ancient times, most of the Szymbras' hailed from the Victorian era—when they were first mass marketed in England—or later. There were chicks and chickens, birds of every kind, rabbits, field mice, foxes, and so many dragons and damsels that the cupboard seemed like a stage of fairy tales wrought in miniature. Some bore shields and royal visages that looked like faux Fabergé or pale Wedgwood. I preferred those with a zoological theme.

As I made my decision, Mrs. Szymbra toasted and buttered homemade bread, sliced it into strips, and halved them into “soldiers” for dipping. Though I anticipated the meal, it seemed a shame to mar that perfectly engineered masterpiece steaming on its pedestal. Still, what else was there to do but swiftly decapitate it with a butter knife, then gaze at the saffron-colored yolk as it glistened, ready to receive my freshly buttered regiments. —*Cedric Rose*

Food for Thought

“Again she thought of a pear—not the everyday gritty kind that hung on the tree in the backyard, but the fine kind sold on trains and at high prices, each pear with a paper cone wrapping it alone—beautiful, symmetrical, clean pears with thin skins, with snow-white flesh so juicy and tender that to eat one baptized the whole face...” —EUDORA

WELTY, *THE GOLDEN APPLES* (1949)



Blue Ribbon Winner

Cordon bleu remains Zurich's favorite bar food

ZURICH'S working-class taverns often plate up Swiss comfort foods like *rösti*, *kalbsbratwurst*, and *raclette* melts. But they are especially beloved for their generous portions of cordon bleu, made with fried cutlets of veal or pork (rarely chicken), and served with a lemon wedge, fresh greens doused in creamy dressing, and a heap of *pommes frites*.

While some taverns are being replaced by contemporary eateries, there are still a handful known especially for their cordon bleu. You can enjoy the dish in a variety of ways—stuffed with prunes, Gorgonzola, even sundried tomatoes. But most of us prefer the classic version, made with ham and a melty cheese like Emmentaler or Gruyère. And one of my favorite cordon bleu dishes, by far, is served at Rheinfelder Bierhalle.

Located along a cobblestone street in the city's Old Town neighborhood, this comfy wood-paneled tavern serves a pork version called Jumbo Jumbo, which edges off both sides of the plate, and oozes cheese when its golden

crust is cracked. Here, the dish is eaten at communal tables, and washed down with mugs of Feldschlösschen lager beer. Owner Walter Schöb tells me he sells about 2,700 plates of Jumbo Jumbo each month.

I have long tried to figure out why cordon bleu is so popular in this city, but its origins are elusive. While many associate the dish with the French cooking school of the same name, some Swiss defenders trace its origins back 200 years when, facing a shortage of veal at her tavern, a native chef pounded cutlets down, then stuffed them with ham and cheese. No matter the history, here's hoping Zurich's cordon bleu tradition is one that's here to stay. —*Adam H. Graham*

★ Zurich Cordon Bleu

SERVES 1-2

This recipe comes from Rheinfelder Bierhalle in Zurich, Switzerland. To prepare the cutlets, place them in plastic wrap and pound gently with a meat mallet.

- 2 4-oz. boneless pork cutlets, pounded $\frac{1}{16}$ " thin
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 2 oz. deli ham, thinly sliced
- 2 oz. Emmentaler cheese, thinly sliced
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour
- 1 egg, beaten
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup bread crumbs
- 1 cup canola oil
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- Lemon wedges, for serving

Season cutlets with salt and pepper. Place ham and cheese on one cutlet, leaving a $\frac{1}{2}$ " border along edge; place other cutlet on top; set aside. Place flour, egg, and bread crumbs in three separate shallow bowls. Dredge stuffed cutlet in flour, and coat in egg, then bread crumbs. Heat oil and butter in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Fry, flipping once, until golden brown and crisp, about 16 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges.

Jumbo Jumbo (pictured above) and the Rheinfelder Bierhalle (right).



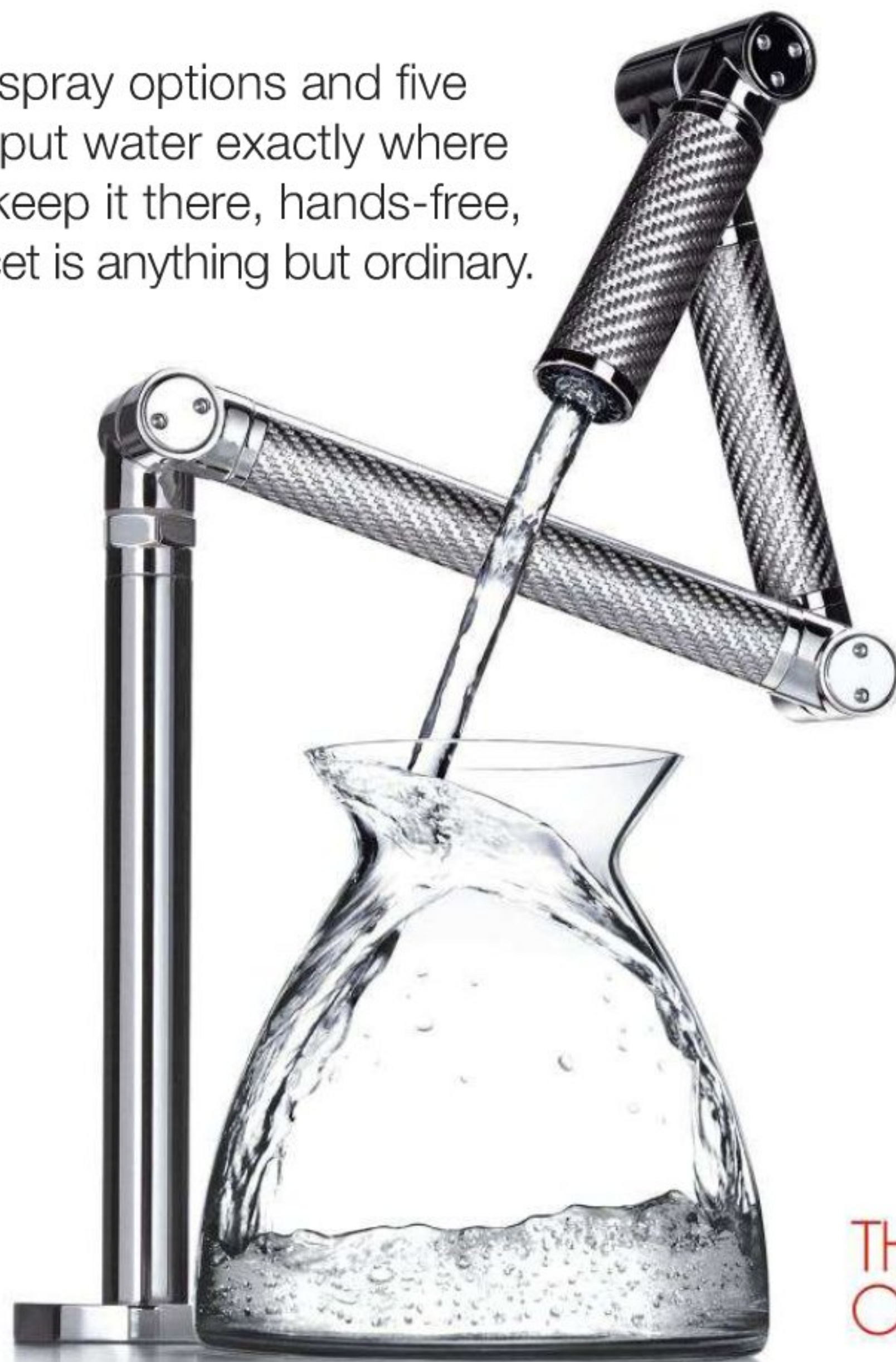
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TODD COLEMAN; COURTESY SWITZERLAND TOURISM/ERWIN ZUEGER; SHUTTERSTOCK

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When I went to live and study in Ghana's capital of Accra last summer, I was expecting authentic Ghanaian food. Unfortunately, as in most major cities, what I encountered was a global mishmash of pizza, Indian curry, Asian noodles—there was even a KFC. But I soon found what I was looking for. Following the advice of a professor, I visited Asanka Locals, a bare-bones counter-service café in the city's Osu neighborhood that serves strictly Ghanaian dishes. The lunchtime staple that caught my eye was a spicy, deep scarlet stew made with black-eyed peas, called red-red, named for the hot red pepper and red palm oil that give the dish its vibrant color.

I pointed to the steaming pot behind the counter, and a cook in a hairnet ladled some out, nestled a pile of twice-fried plantains alongside the thick stew, and handed me the plate.

Taking a cue from the mid-day crowd, I smashed a plantain slice between my thumb and index finger to form a spoon, then scooped the stew into my mouth. Sitting there, I thought about how many dishes of the American South, where I grew up, were brought there by Africans from this region during the slave trade; how similar this dish was to the black-eyed peas my mother made for me in our Tennessee kitchen—and how strange it was to be eating something so familiar so far away from home.

—Katrina Moore

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ILLY MOKA GROUND COFFEE MEDIUM ROAST

Sweet and delicate, with subtle hints of cocoa, this full-bodied dark roast blend from Italy is ground specifically for stove-top coffeemakers (slightly coarser than espresso). illy.com

CHOCK FULL O'NUTS ORIGINAL

This medium-roast coffee, which brews a mellow cup, harks back to the 1950s, when Chock Full o'Nuts cafés lined the streets of Manhattan much as Starbucks do today. chockfullonuts.com

TIM HORTONS

Canada's favorite donut chain makes a light-bodied 100 percent Arabica coffee that hits all the smooth chocolatey notes of a classic diner coffee. timhortons.com

JITTERY JOE'S SUMATRA WAHANA NATURAL

A single-source coffee from Sumatra, this is one of the most complex canned coffees we've tasted—layered berry and tropical fruit flavors give way to a nutty brew. jitteryjoes.com

CANNED GOOD

It was the late 1800s when Boston's Chase & Sanborn company became the first to package ground coffee in sealed tins. After all these years, those tins still do a fine job keeping things fresh. Coffee snob or not, it's good to have a canned backup once the single-origin Ethiopian runs dry. Here are our favorites. —Dawn Mobley

CAFÉ ALTURA FAIR TRADE DARK ROAST BLEND

A blend of Fair Trade organic beans grown by independent farmers in Central and South America makes for a bright, full-bodied coffee with a smooth mouth-feel. cafealtura.com

CAFÉ DU MONDE COFFEE AND CHICORY

Facing a coffee shortage during the Civil War, New Orleanians made do, using chicory as a supplement. Roasted chicory root still lends this dark roast joe a nice woody kick. It's best prepared *au lait*, with equal parts coffee and hot milk, just as it is at the namesake Big Easy café. cafedumonde.com

MORNING STAR FAIR TRADE ORGANIC BREAKFAST BLEND

Roasted in Minneapolis, this medium-bodied blend is made with beans from Central America and Mexico. We like its smooth flavor: both sweet and slightly citrusy. morningstarcoffee.com



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**I Love My Kitchen
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Room with a View

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In a lot of midcentury houses—ours was built in 1958—the kitchens were updated in the 1980s and '90s with generic cabinetry and granite countertops. My husband Brandon and I didn't want that. Our kitchen is original to the house, though we did tear down a wall that used to divide the kitchen from the breakfast area. The original part of the kitchen was built really well. I love its old knotty pine cabinets, its wood ceilings, and how its sturdy solid-wood drawers make such a perfect thud sound when I close them. All of the appliances, except for the refrigerator and dishwasher, are original as well. The oven is a Hotpoint electric in harvest gold that mostly still works great. My mother-in-law laughs sometimes because it looks like the old ranges she remembers from the 1960s and '70s.


More than anything, though, I love the light. Our stove faces an enormous wall of plate-glass windows that look out onto Puget Sound, which provides more than enough inspiration to cook. And when I'm at my sink rinsing dishes, I can look outside and see so many trees it feels like I'm in a forest. —Molly Wizenberg, cookbook author and creator of the food blog *Orangette*.



Aside from extra prep space, this stainless-steel table is great for storing our big counter appliances—not to mention kibble for our dogs Jack and Alice.

This copper light fixture is on a retractable cord, so you can actually pull it down to about two feet from the ground. Great for, I don't know, a kitchen floor picnic?

My white KitchenAid stand mixer dates from the 1970s, when they were still made by Hobart. It was the first gift my husband ever bought me, while we were dating. He tracked it down on eBay.



One of the big reasons we fell in love with this house was the kitchen's Douglas fir ceiling, which gives the room a real feeling of warmth and comfort.

We have hundreds of cookbooks, most of which we keep upstairs. But the ones we use often are stored on the fridge, which is low enough for easy access.

This apple cake (see recipe at right) has a wonderful cinnamon glaze. Don't worry. It looks way more time-consuming than it is.

TART APPLE CAKE

SERVES 8

The chewy, almost cookie-like crust of this cake holds tender sliced apples under a thin caramelized topping.

- 11 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed and chilled, plus more for pan
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus more for pan
- 1 1/3 cups sugar
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- 3 eggs
- 3 large tart apples, such as Granny Smith, peeled, cored, and thinly sliced
- 1 tsp. ground cinnamon
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

Heat oven to 350°. Grease and flour a 9" springform pan; set aside. In a food processor, pulse 5 tbsp. butter, flour, 1 cup sugar, baking powder, and salt into pea-size crumbs. Add vanilla and 1 egg; mix until a soft, sticky dough forms. Add to prepared pan, dip your fingers in flour, and press dough evenly into bottom and halfway up the sides of pan. Arrange apple slices in a tight circular pattern, overlapping, and pressing slightly into dough. Bake until apples are tender and dough is almost cooked through, 35–40 minutes. Meanwhile, melt remaining butter in a bowl; whisk in remaining sugar and eggs, plus cinnamon. Remove cake from oven and pour butter mixture evenly over apples. Bake until top is browned and set, 12–15 minutes more. Transfer to a wire rack until cool; remove from pan, cut into slices and serve with vanilla ice cream, if you like.

W For more "I Love My Kitchen Because," visit saveur.com/ilmkb.

AGENDA

April 2013

April

6

Anniversary TV DINNERS

1953, Omaha, Nebraska

In 1953 Omaha-based C.A. Swanson & Sons, a poultry supplier, found itself with an overstock of 260 tons of unsold Thanksgiving turkeys and avoided financial disaster through innovation. Their "TV Dinner" featured the excess turkey as a single-serving meal cooked, sliced, and packaged with stuffing, gravy, sweet potatoes, peas, and butter, all portioned out in an oven-safe aluminum tray. It would forever alter supper as we know it.

April

11-14

FRENCH QUARTER FESTIVAL

New Orleans

A lesser-known but equally enthralling draw of the French Quarter Festival is its magnificent jazz brunch. Touted as the world's largest, it takes place



along the Mississippi River in the Quarter's Woldenberg Park, where diners are served righteous amounts of gumbo,

jambalaya, crawfish, and other local specialties from venerable New Orleans restaurants such as Galatoire's and Antoine's. Attendees can then work it all off dancing to scores of jazz, Cajun, and zydeco bands. Info: fqfi.org

April

25-28

DUBLIN BAY PRAWN FESTIVAL

Fingal and Howth, Ireland

The main event at this music and seafood fest along Dublin Bay is the Mystery Dine Around. Participants are summoned to a courthouse, then taken on a course-by-course "trial" of restaurants, later reconvening at a pub to arrive at a verdict on which served the best dish. Visitors can also indulge at a Food Village where stalls offer dishes made with locally caught prawns, then kick back with live music and drinks at participating village pubs. Info: dublinbayprawnfestival.com

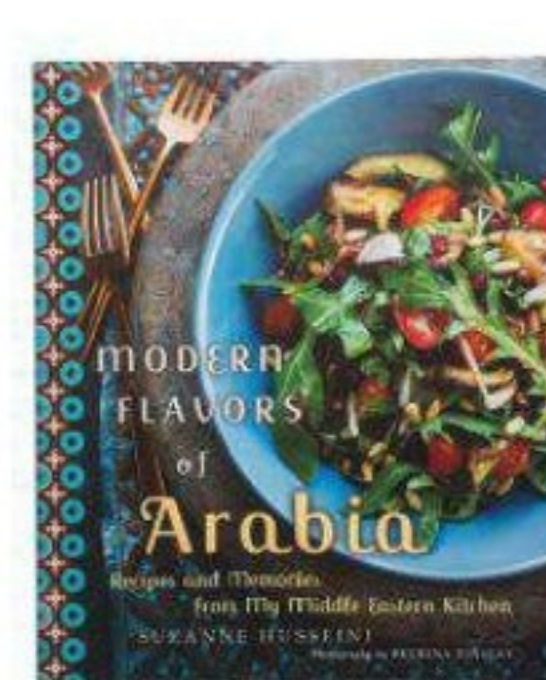
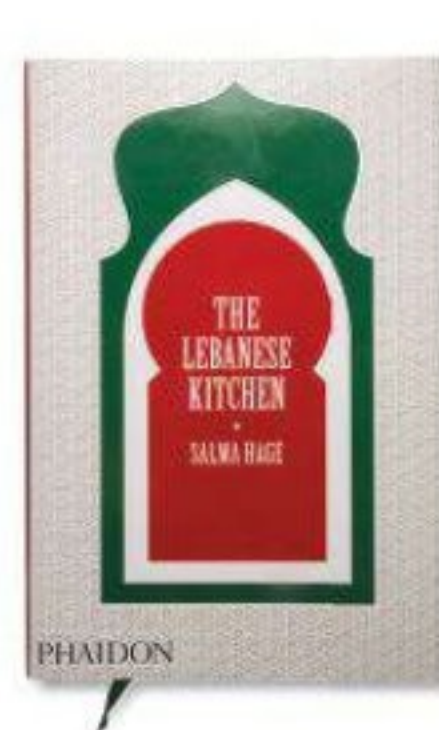
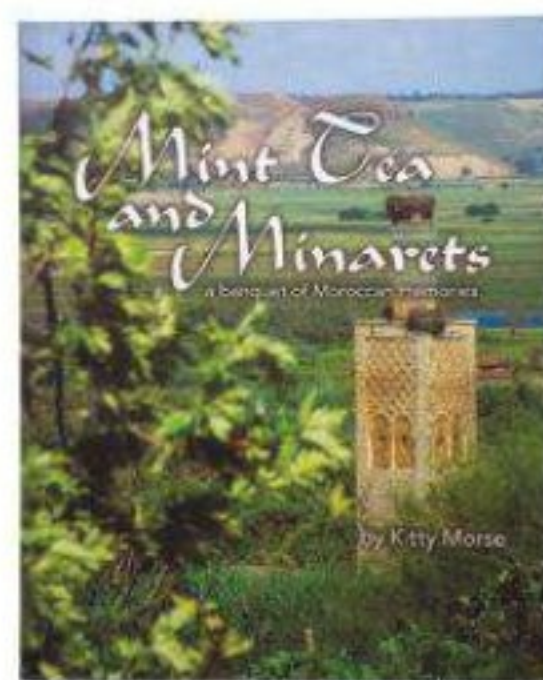
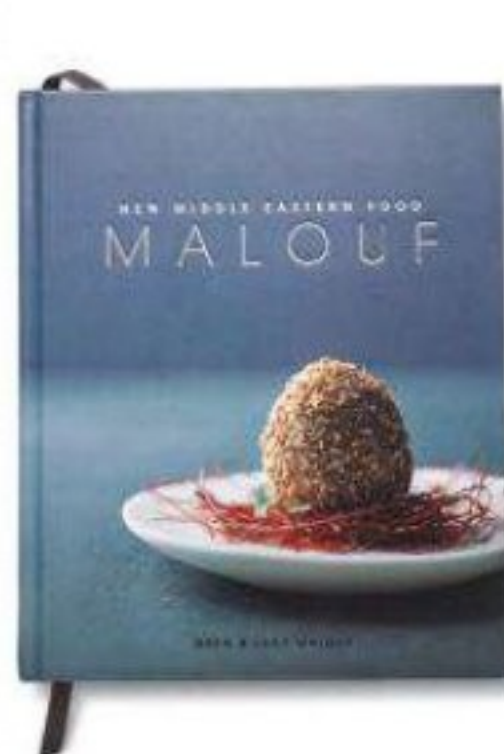
April

26-28

ARBOR DAY CELEBRATIONS

Nebraska City, Nebraska

Each year folks in Nebraska City celebrate Arbor Day with tree-sprung food and drinks such as apple pie and apple cider, a parade, and a chili cookoff. That's because Arbor Day got its start here in 1872 when resident J. Sterling Morton, a former U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, encouraged locals to spend a day beautifying their surroundings by planting trees. Info: nebraskacity.com



Book Review

The Middle East, Revisited

Four fresh takes on an ancient cuisine

MALOUF: NEW MIDDLE EASTERN FOOD

Greg and Lucy Malouf (Hardie Grant Books, 2012)

Greg Malouf, formerly of MoMo, a Middle Eastern restaurant in Melbourne, Australia, has made a career of adapting the food of his Lebanese childhood to a modern global palate. For instance, he combines kibbeh, a lamb and bulgar fritter, with mozzarella cheese for a pan-Mediterranean croquette. And he plays with other cuisines as well, seasoning his "Southern" fried chicken with South Asian ingredients such as turmeric, paprika, and coriander. Together with his former wife and co-author Lucy, he makes restaurant-quality dishes accessible with down-to-earth guidance doled out with a sense of charm and disarming modesty (that kibbeh recipe, for example, includes this reassuring note: "They are a little fiddly to make but with a bit of practice you can achieve a passable, if not exceptional, result"). Indeed, when I made Malouf's lamb *manoushi*, a blend of vegetables and meat that's puréed and fried, then crumbled over fresh hummus, it yielded the type of soulful yet refined cookery that has turned me into an instant fan of his cooking. For all his talk of passable results, this dish turned out to be exceptional.

MINT TEA AND MINARETS: A BANQUET OF MOROCCAN MEMORIES

Kitty Morse (La Caravane Publishing, 2012)

This absorbing new memoir by cookbook writer Kitty Morse follows the author as she returns to her beloved Moroccan birthplace. We first meet up with her as she smuggles her British father's ashes from London to Morocco—a place he also loved—then tag along while she painstakingly restores an ancient Berber castle he left her. What makes the story particularly delicious, though, are the recipes that punctuate each chapter—hearty tagines, orange-blossom-scented desserts—all of which allow readers, through their sense of taste and smell, to accompany her along the way. The book reads like a novel, with yellowed family pictures, antique postcards, and arresting photos (taken by Morse's husband) of contemporary Morocco, heightening the sense of adventure. Taking a break from reading, I headed to my kitchen to make her meltingly tender *mrouziya*—a honey and spice rubbed lamb shoulder. Within an hour my apartment was flooded with the sweet and spicy aromas of Morocco. As the lamb sizzled in the oven, I went back to the book, continuing on the journey.

THE LEBANESE KITCHEN

Salma Hage (Phaidon Press, 2012)

Lebanese-born chef Salma Hage may have learned to cook professionally in England, but it all started in her family's home kitchen. With this debut effort, she has canonized the dishes of her youth, giving us one of the most comprehensive guides to Lebanese cooking ever published—a 500-page volume, with the striking photography of Toby Glanville to boot. Before moving to England in 1967, Hage lived in a small Maronite Catholic village where she made simple rustic food from the bounty of the family garden: grilled zucchini and mint, roasted figs with almonds, and more. She returns there often, and her book reflects an intimacy with the cuisine. A recipe for a sesame loaf stuffed with deliciously salty *halloúmi* cheese recommends baking until the bread "sounds hollow when tapped on the underside," a folksy tip that yielded a fantastically crisp crust, and a light, airy crumb. An early section on basics—a quick tomato sauce, a *za'atar* seasoning blend—prepares home cooks for the more ambitious fare to come, including six variations on falafel, from traditional fava bean to carrot-cumin and cilantro-green chile, all showcasing Lebanese cooking in all its splendor.

MODERN FLAVORS OF ARABIA: RECIPES AND MEMORIES FROM MY MIDDLE EASTERN KITCHEN

Suzanne Husseini (Appetite by Random House, 2012)

I was delighted when dipping into Middle Eastern chef Suzanne Husseini's new cookbook this past winter. So colorful were the flavorful dishes that unfurled before me—sliced grilled eggplant topped with ruby red pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, and torn mint; a lemony tabbouleh as green as fresh-cut grass—that my winter doldrums immediately lifted. Husseini, who splits her time between Canada and Dubai, where she judges *Top Chef Middle East*, presents pan-Arab standards such as falafel and hummus alongside recipes with a Western influence like pistachio-crust rack of lamb with tomato and arugula salad. The Palestinian-born author's enthusiasm for sharing her culinary heritage materializes in accessible recipes requiring few ingredients. And the sumptuous photographs by Petrina Tinsley will inspire you to create dishes such as Husseini's herb-filled cauliflower fritter and her chocolate cardamom cookies at home.

—Felicia Campbell

THE PANTRY, [page 85](#): Info on buying eggs, cups, books, and more.

FROM TOP: TODD COLEMAN (4); ZACH SMITH/COURTESY FRENCH QUARTER FESTIVAL

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INGREDIENT

Good Stalk

Hardy, bright, and assertive, rhubarb is a refreshing taste of spring

BY DARA MOSKOWITZ GRUMDAHL

NEW YORK CITY IN THE 1980s was not safe for children. Some were disappearing to kidnappers, others were disappearing to crack. Between that and the garbage strikes and divorce, the best place for kids was inside, in front of the television. I think that's why the New York City natives I know from that era all became different sorts of hothouse flowers, strong and strange. As for me, I got bored with the reruns on TV and

turned to my mother's bookcase of college classics, which caused me to become obsessed with, of all things, the American Midwest, as seen through the eyes of F. Scott Fitzgerald and Willa Cather. The Midwest was a fantasyland where the skyscrapers were built of prairie clouds, and where the biggest danger seemed

Spice-braised rhubarb (see [page 28](#) for a recipe).

to be quiet yearnings for excitement.

I arrived in Minnesota for college in the last months of 1988 and never looked back. Upon graduating I realized you could buy a house with an attic that smelled like a barn, and a covered porch—a real Victorian-era house that was walking distance to an organic bakery and a Vietnamese restaurant—for less than a hundred thousand dollars. So I did. Then I headed to the garden center for my first real purchases as a landholding Midwesterner. I wanted a rosebush and a rhubarb patch. Just like Willa Cather had.

But my friend Mitch told me that you can't buy rhubarb plants just anywhere; usually people just had them. Well, what then? His mother knew of a farm stand. And by the side of the road, there they were: strawberry-hued rhubarb plants growing in plastic gallon milk jugs, the tops scissored off, holes punched in the bottom. A table made of planks had a clear and direct sign: \$5. Another plastic jug was nailed to the plank tabletop. You just put your cash in

DARA MOSKOWITZ GRUMDAHL is a food and wine writer based in Minneapolis. Her most recent article for *SAVEUR* was "Green Wines" (January/February 2012).

the jug. Cash in a jug at the side of the road, where anyone could take it. But no one ever would.

NOW BEAR WITH ME, because here things get dull. The rhubarb went in the ground and thrived. That's what rhubarb does. Whether you're in Minnesota or Tibet, Missouri or Latvia, England, Alaska, or Iran, rhubarb grows like a weed pretty much anywhere

Rhubarb can be braised until custardy, baked into upside-down cake, whipped into a mousse, or juiced into a granita

with usable soil and a hard freeze in the winter, which the plant needs to thrive. But now things get interesting again, because at my local farmers' market, and at all of those in the rest of the snowbelt, this weediness makes rhubarb one of the superstars of early spring. That's when bundles of rhubarb stalks appear alongside ramps, fiddlehead ferns, and wild watercress. They mark the true end of winter, the beginning of the edible outdoors, the start of local cooking becoming exciting, even exuberant, again.

There are in fact a wealth of exciting and exuberant ways you can cook rhubarb: braised in syrup until custardy; baked into rustic upside-down cake; whipped into an elegant rhubarb mousse; juiced into lemonade or ruby-tinted granita. Though of course you can do all sorts of things with rhubarb, you probably won't, because here in the United States, rhubarb means pie: rhubarb pie, strawberry-rhubarb pie, rhubarb crumble, strawberry-rhubarb crumble. In English-speaking lands, rhubarb is so closely associated with pie that it's often called pie plant.

That's a homely end to what was once a very interesting life for a globe-trotting political pawn. *Rheum rhabarbarum*, thought to have originated in northwest China, was once the subject of hot dispute between Russian czars and Chinese emperors. Rhubarb was first written about some 2,700 years ago in *The Divine Farmer's Herb-Root Classic*, one of China's earliest known pharmaceutical texts, and was prized for the medicinal value of its roots, for they had a remarkable ability to cure dysentery, diarrhea, and constipation—it was the Pepto-Bismol and Ex-Lax of the preindustrial age and a key export of



Feasted with friends.

Talked for hours.

Lost track of time.

China. In the book *The Silk Road: Two Thousand Years in the Heart of Asia* (University of California Press, 2004), historian Frances Wood quotes the ambassador to Samarkand in 1405, who enumerated the good stuff that came along the Silk Road from China: “silk, satins, musk, rubies, diamonds, pearls, and rhubarb.” In 17th-century Russia, rhubarb was so valuable that much of the country’s treasury was derived from the medicinal sales of the imported rhubarb root. When Chinese emperors and Russian czars had a border dispute, withholding rhubarb was China’s biggest weapon.

Rhubarb, in its sour, vegetable, nonmedicinal guise, came into common kitchen and garden use only after plantations made sugar widely available and affordable in the past few centuries—the sweetener is what made rhubarb fit for pie. The part of rhubarb we eat, the stalks—white, pink, crimson, grasshopper green, whitish green, or red, depending on the variety—are actually rhubarb leaf bases called petioles. Other petioles we commonly eat are celery, Swiss chard, Napa cabbage and endive, and, arguably, asparagus. Stick to the petioles of rhubarb—the leaves, which contain toxic oxalic acid, can be lethal to those with sensitivities to it or to rhubarb-leaf gluttons

(five kilos would be enough to poison most people). In my own Minnesota neighborhood I’ve seen kids chasing each other with rhubarb leaves as if they’re murder weapons that could kill on contact.

Marcus Jernmark, the Swedish-born chef of the vaunted restaurant Aquavit in Manhattan, remembers those types of rhubarb shenanigans, as well as the ritual of peeling stalks of rhubarb and chewing them raw during his childhood in Gothenburg. Now he’s one of the high-end chefs leading a charge to get rhubarb out of the pie: “In early spring, peas and rhubarb really set the tone of the menu, sometimes with ramps or morels,” says Jernmark, whose offerings last spring included herring in a rhubarb-spiked brine and pickled rhubarb with sturgeon, citrus, cilantro, nasturtium flowers, and sweet Maine shrimp—each touched by rhubarb’s tart freshness and bearing its vibrant rosy color.

Across cuisines, rhubarb’s defining sourness is often seen as its greatest asset. According to Louisa Shafia, author of *The New Persian Kitchen* (Ten Speed Press, 2013), “Rhubarb got to Persia along the Silk Road and stayed because Iranians love sour food—pomegranates, lemon juice,

lime juice, sour-orange juice, barberries—all those ingredients are very tart.” She likes to use fresh minced rhubarb as the finishing acidic note to a savory stew of barley and lamb. “I add it right at the end and stir it in, so it gets soft but not mushy, because then you lose the great sourness.”

I usually like to take farmers’ market bundles of spring’s first rhubarb, cut them into pieces, and roast them in the oven with honey, orange juice, and warm aromatic spices like cardamom and star anise. The resulting mixture makes a great compote to be strewn over pound cake or ice cream. Sometimes I cook the compote down and strain away the solids. The reduced syrup is perfect for a locavore variation on a lemon drop—a little Midwestern vodka, a little rhubarb syrup, well chilled. I like to drink a rhubarb drop sitting in my porch swing, overlooking my own garden rhubarb patch, while considering czars and emperors of yore and a world in which rhubarb was as valuable as diamonds and pearls and made headlines—not pie. For this New York City hothouse flower gone country, it’s a tart taste of the peculiar past and answers the question: What’s dull and interesting and good all over? Rhubarb in the spring. 🐝



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McCormick Gourmet Collection Smoked Paprika Roasted Salmon with Wilted Spinach

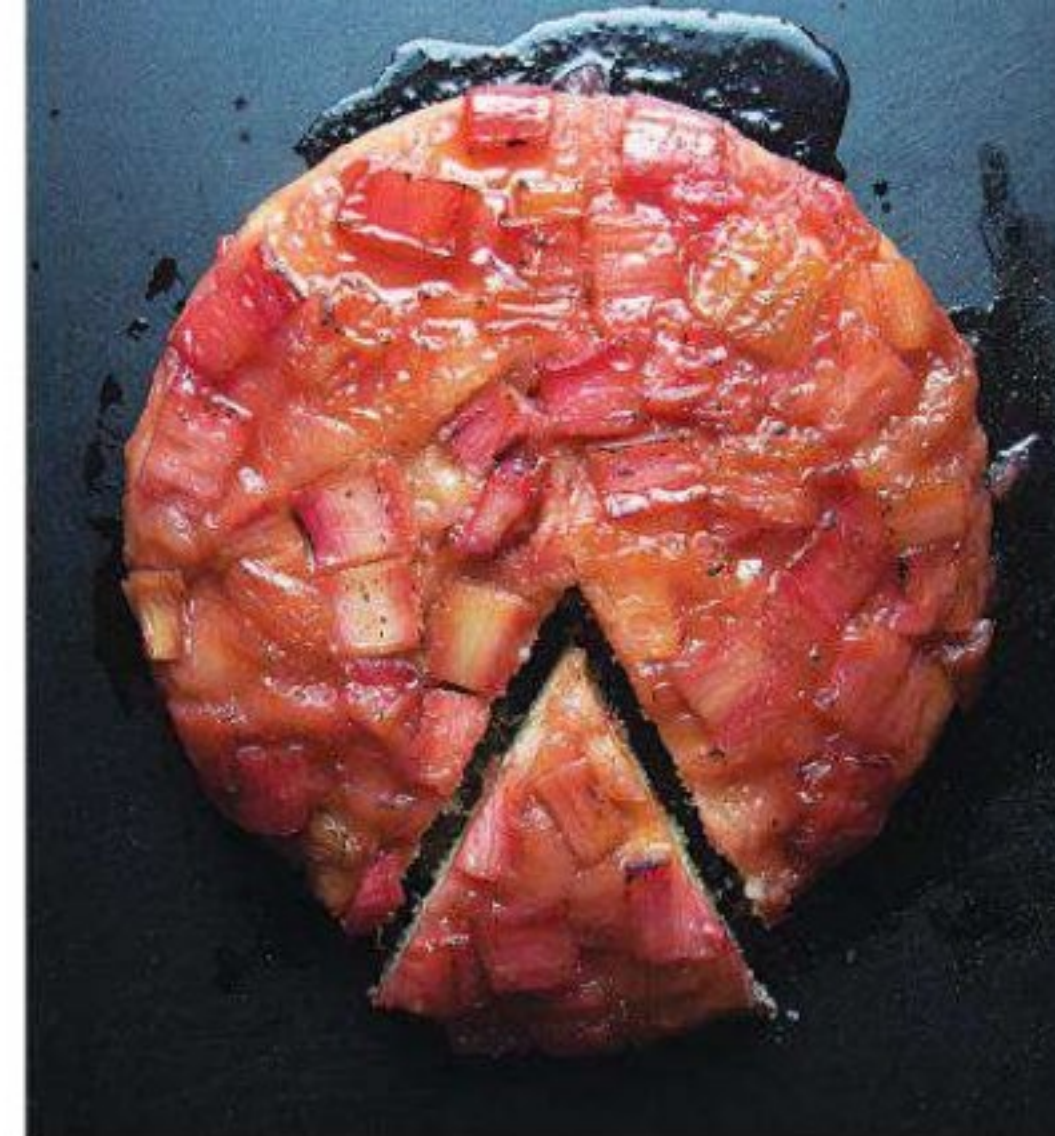
Ingredients
Directions

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1/4 cup orange juice | 1 tbsp. brown sugar | 1/2 tsp. Sicilian Sea Salt |
| 2 tbsp. olive oil | 1 tbsp. Smoked Paprika | 1 bag (10 oz.) fresh spinach leaves |
| 2 tsp. Thyme Leaves , divided | 1 tsp. Saigon Cinnamon | 1 tsp. olive oil |
| 2 lb. salmon fillets | 1 tsp. grated orange peel | |
- MIX** juice, 2 tbsp. oil and 1 tsp. of the thyme in glass dish. Add salmon; turn to coat. Cover. Refrigerate 30 minutes.
- MIX** sugar, remaining spices and orange peel. Remove salmon from marinade. Place in foil-lined baking pan. Discard any remaining marinade. Rub top of salmon evenly with spice mixture.
- ROAST** in preheated 400°F oven 10 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Heat 1 tsp. oil in large nonstick skillet on medium heat. Add spinach; cook 2 minutes or until wilted. Serve with salmon. Makes 8 servings.

For more great-tasting recipes, visit mccormickgourmet.com

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From left: rhubarb granita, rhubarb mousse, and rhubarb upside-down cake. See recipes below.

Rhubarb Granita

MAKES 3 CUPS

Simple and refreshing, this granita (pictured above, at left) is creamier than most and uses strawberries for their color and sweetness.

- ½ cup sugar
- ½ lb. rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 1" pieces
- 1 cup sliced strawberries, plus more for garnish
- 3 tbsp. fresh lemon juice

Bring sugar and 1 cup water to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan over high heat; cook, stirring, until sugar is dissolved, 1–2 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-high and add rhubarb; cook until tender, about 5 minutes. Add strawberries and lemon juice; cook 2 minutes more. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve, discarding solids. Pour into a 9" x 13" baking dish, cover with plastic wrap, and place in the freezer. Using the tines of a fork, stir the mixture every 30 minutes, scraping edges and breaking up any ice chunks as the mixture freezes, until granita is slushy and frozen, about 3 hours. Scoop into chilled serving glasses and top with sliced strawberries, if you like.

Rhubarb Mousse

MAKES 4½ CUPS

This sweet-tart creamy dessert (pictured above, at center) can be eaten chilled or frozen in ramekins.

- 1 lb. rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 1" pieces
- ⅓ cup unsweetened apple juice
- ½ cup packed light brown sugar
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- ¼ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 eggs, separated into yolks and whites
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract

1 Bring rhubarb and apple juice to a boil in a 2-qt. saucepan over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low, cover and cook until tender, about 4 minutes. Transfer rhubarb and juice to a blender along with 1 tbsp. brown sugar, plus the salt and cinnamon; puree until smooth. Whisk rhubarb purée, yolks, and remaining brown sugar together in the pan and return to medium heat. Cook, whisking constantly, until slightly thickened, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a large bowl; let cool.

2 Whisk egg whites in a bowl until stiff peaks form; add to rhubarb mixture. Fold gently until combined; set aside. Whisk cream and vanilla in a bowl until stiff peaks form; add to rhubarb mixture. Fold until combined. Spoon into serving cups; chill before serving.

Rhubarb Upside-Down Cake

SERVES 6–8

For this cake (pictured above, at right), made in the style of a tarte Tatin, rhubarb is caramelized until soft before it's topped with batter and baked.

- ¾ lb. rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 1½" pieces on an angle
- 1½ cups sugar
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus 6 tbsp. cut into ½" cubes and chilled
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 2½ cups flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- ½ cup vegetable shortening
- ⅓ cup milk
- 2 eggs
- Vanilla ice cream or whipped cream, for serving (optional)

1 Heat oven to 375°. Combine rhubarb, 1 cup sugar, 4 tbsp. butter, lemon juice, vanilla, and ¼ tsp. salt in a 9" cast-iron skillet over medium

heat. Cook, stirring occasionally, until sugar is melted and rhubarb is tender and slightly caramelized, 8–10 minutes.

2 Meanwhile, whisk together remaining sugar and salt, plus flour and baking powder in a bowl. Add remaining butter and the shortening and, using your fingers, rub into flour mixture to form coarse pea-size pieces. Add milk and eggs and stir until a soft, sticky dough forms. Place spoonfuls of dough over rhubarb mixture and smooth with a nonstick spatula. Bake until the crust is golden and cooked through, about 30 minutes. Remove skillet from oven; place a large flat serving platter on top of the skillet and invert quickly and carefully. Serve warm or at room temperature with ice cream or whipped cream, if you like.

Spice-Braised Rhubarb

MAKES 4 CUPS

Orange juice, honey, and aromatic spices reduce into an intense syrup while tenderizing the rhubarb in this fruit compote (pictured on [page 25](#)).

- 1½ lb. rhubarb, trimmed and cut into 2" pieces on an angle
- 1 cup fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup honey
- ½ tsp. kosher salt
- 8 green cardamom pods
- 2 star anise
- 1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise, seeds scraped and reserved
- 1 ½" piece ginger, peeled and thickly sliced crosswise
- Yogurt or vanilla ice cream, for serving

Heat oven to 400°. Mix together rhubarb, orange juice, honey, salt, cardamom, star anise, vanilla bean and seeds, and ginger in a 9" x 13" baking dish. Bake, stirring occasionally, until rhubarb is tender, 14–16 minutes. Let cool to room temperature. Serve over yogurt or ice cream, if you like.

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CLASSIC

Orient Express

Long dismissed as takeout cliché, egg foo yung deserves a second look

BY MEI CHIN

SOME YEARS AGO I was sitting in a Chinese restaurant in my hometown of Brookline, Massachusetts, drinking pineapple martinis with my friend Samantha. I picked up a menu. “What’s egg foo yung?” I asked.

Sam, who is half Chinese and half Caucasian, stared at me. “You don’t know what egg foo yung is? You have got to be kidding.”

At 21 years old, I had never tried egg foo yung. A first-generation American-born Chinese, I was banned from certain things as a child. Television. Dating. Action movies. Then there was Chinese-American food, of which egg foo yung is an icon. Tweaked over the decades to suit American palates, the cuisine—standard suburban takeout fare—originated with 19th-century immigrants from Canton in southern China. My mother, who hailed from northern China, had a hoity-toity attitude toward anything Cantonese.

Moo goo gai pan, egg foo yung, chop suey: I only came across them in books by non-Chinese authors. In the young adult novel *The Westing Game* by Ellen Raskin, Mr. Hoo serves such dishes in his Wisconsin restaurant, while his young Chinese wife sashays in a cheongsam and shouts “Boom!” which is one of the only English words she knows.

Golden Temple, where Samantha and I were lunching, had been more like the Forbidden Temple during my youth. My mother dismissed it as the worst Chinese restaurant in the world. I had longed to go for years. It did not disappoint. With its red silk wall hangings and art deco touches, Golden Temple felt like a place where Anna May Wong, the Chinese-American film noir star, might be found scheming in the corner.

As for the egg foo yung, I had been expecting something like eggdrop soup over fried rice, so I was amazed to be presented with such an elegant dish. It was a lacy golden omelette with an elaborate filling mixed in—bean sprouts and minced water chestnuts; bits of roast pork and

MEI CHIN’s last article for *SAVEUR* was “*Bone Gatherer*” (March 2012).



Shrimp egg foo yung with gravy (see [page 32](#) for a recipe) at the Manhattan restaurant Shun Lee West.

fresh shrimp; chopped scallions. Pillowy and punctuated with crunchy vegetables, it was bronzed at its edges from frying. At its side was a silver sauceboat of brown gravy, which was thick and savory, a little bit sweet and a little bit salty. Garnished like a cocktail with orange slices and a maraschino cherry, this egg foo yung didn’t seem like something to unceremoniously shove into a take-out container; to me, it looked like a special occasion dish.

As I found out, that’s how most Americans once thought of it. “It wasn’t glamorous exactly but exotic, for sure,” says Dr. Yong Chen, a his-

tory professor at the University of California, Irvine, who is writing a book on Chinese food in America. Some say egg foo yung originates in a custardy egg preparation, called *fu rong*, that’s often mixed with fancy ingredients like crabmeat and served at Cantonese banquets. No one quite knows how our egg foo yung sprung from that frou-frou dish, but Cantonese-style cooking proved a hit after it was introduced by Chinese who arrived in California during the Gold Rush hoping to strike it rich. In *James Beard’s American Cookery*, Beard speculates that egg foo yung, made by Chinese

TODD COLEMAN

THE RECIPE

Ripped Idaho® Potatoes

2 Large Idaho® Potatoes
4 T Olive Oil
1 ½ T Salted Butter
¼ C Curly Parsley
2 T Grana Padano
Parmesan Cheese

THE CHEF

John Schenk

Corporate Executive Chef
Strip House Restaurants
New York, NY and
Las Vegas, NV

Chef Schenk has cooked his way around the culinary world, including France and even Africa, before becoming a Broadway star in the Big Apple. He now oversees the Strip House restaurants across the country.


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cooks for loggers and railroad gangs, was the inspiration for our Western omelette.


By the turn of the 20th century, Chinese-American fare like egg foo yung was being embraced by the middle class as a bohemian pleasure. In Sinclair Lewis's 1920 novel *Main Street*, a Midwestern couple on an urban excursion sit in a Minneapolis restaurant "at a teak and marble table eating Eggs Foo-yung" and feeling "altogether cosmopolitan."

As Cantonese restaurants multiplied, the novelty wore off. In the second half of the century, immigrants from Hunan, Sichuan, and elsewhere in China arrived, and their cuisines edged Cantonese-American food out of popularity. Egg foo yung and other old standards were denigrated by Chinese and Americans alike. Cecilia Chiang, the Beijing-raised doyenne of Chinese cooking in the United States for the past 50 years, is a case in point. "Why ruin a perfectly good omelette with gravy, cornstarch, and oyster sauce?" she asked me. When she talks about egg foo yung, she sounds a lot like my mother.

But there are some who, like me, find beauty in the dish. Ed Schoenfeld, owner of the New York City Chinese restaurant RedFarm, first fell in love with it as a boy in Brooklyn in the 1960s. He says a good egg foo yung is the mark of a well-honed chef. "If I don't trust the cook," he says, "I'll order something like the chicken wings. I don't get the egg foo yung." Seasoned pros, says Schoenfeld, start with very hot oil and a high flame, so that the eggs puff and set right away in the heat. The omelette should billow as dramatically as a soufflé, and the final product should be crisp and tawny on the outside and creamy in the center.

Unfortunately, such an egg foo yung is difficult to find. So I have taken to making my own. I do not have the fiery heat of a Chinese restaurant, nor do I have the skills of a crack wok chef, but I make do. I like a combination of *char siu*, or ground pork, scallions, shrimp, and fresh water chestnuts as my filling. I use room temperature eggs for maximum puff. I have the sauce simmering: the standard oyster sauce, soy sauce, and cornstarch, along with ginger and garlic—familiar but with a kick. I layer my ingredients into small bowls, crack one egg into each, crank up the flame, and fry each miniature omelette with a flick of the pan.

Beneath its silken wash of gravy, it is indeed the perfect exotic dish: showy, a bit vulgar, and not entirely unfamiliar. It may have Chinese-American origins, but it does not connote fractions and hours of piano practice, which is what growing up Chinese in America meant for me. Instead, it evokes a fantasy China of

femme fatales and international intrigue. I like to think that in making it I am paying tribute to all aspects of my heritage, especially the ones that exist in my imagination. 

★ Egg Foo Yung

MAKES 8 OMELETTES

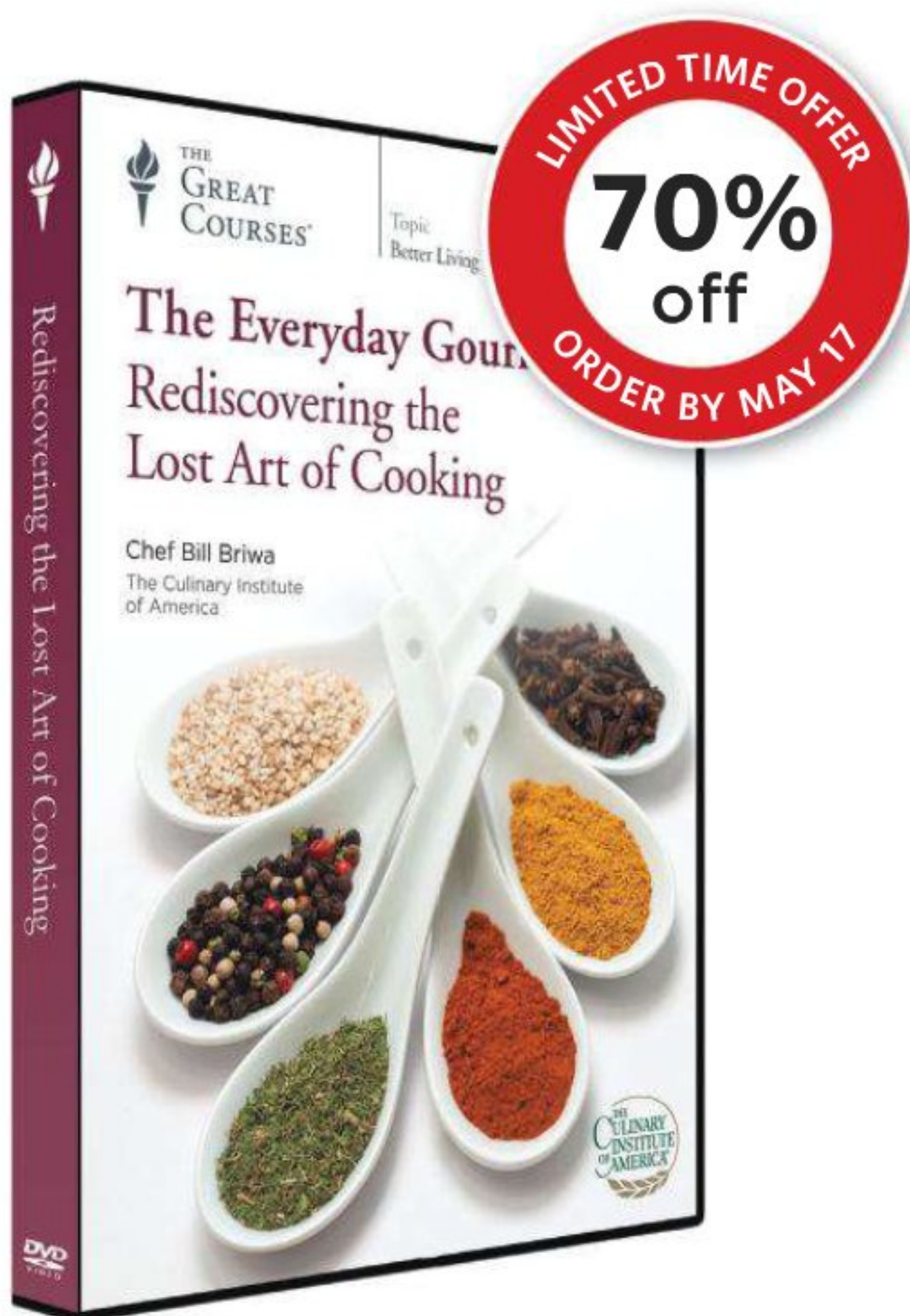
The chefs at Shun Lee West in Manhattan have a great trick for forming egg foo yung: They use a wok ladle to place the egg mixture into the oil so that it sets in the shape of the ladle's bowl.

- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1/3 cup soy sauce
- 1/4 cup cornstarch
- 2 tbsp. oyster sauce (see [page 85](#))
- 1 tbsp. plus 1 tsp. dry sherry
- 1 1/2" piece ginger, peeled and thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 1/2 lb. ground pork
- 1 tsp. plus 1 tbsp. sesame oil
- 1 1/2 tsp. rice wine vinegar
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper
- 1 tsp. canola oil, plus more for frying
- 6 oz. raw shrimp, peeled, deveined, and finely chopped
- 1/2 cup water chestnuts, finely chopped, drained and squeezed dry
- 1/3 cup bean sprouts
- 1/3 cup sliced scallions, plus more for serving
- 6 eggs, beaten

1 Bring stock, half the soy sauce, 1 tbsp. cornstarch, the oyster sauce, 1 tbsp. sherry, the ginger, and garlic to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan over high heat. Cook, whisking, until thickened, 2–3 minutes; strain sauce and keep warm.

2 Mix 2 tbsp. soy sauce, 1 tbsp. cornstarch, remaining sherry, the pork, 1 tsp. sesame oil, the vinegar, salt, and pepper in a bowl; set aside for 10 minutes. Heat 1 tsp. canola oil in an 8" non-stick skillet over medium-high heat. Add pork mixture; cook, stirring and breaking up meat, until it is no longer pink, 3–4 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer pork to a bowl; set aside.

3 Pour canola oil into a 6-quart saucepan to a depth of 2". Heat until a deep-fry thermometer reads 350°. Combine remaining soy sauce, cornstarch, and sesame oil, plus reserved pork, the shrimp, water chestnuts, bean sprouts, scallions, eggs, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Using a ladle and working in batches, gently lower 1/2 cup amounts of egg mixture into oil; cook, flipping once, until omelettes are puffed and brown, 1 1/2–2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer omelettes to paper towels. Serve drizzled with reserved sauce; garnish with scallions.



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SOURCE



Turtle Power

A Massachusetts candymaker updates an American favorite

BY JANE AND MICHAEL STERN

IN 1918, A CANDY DIPPER in Chicago commented that the pecan-studded chocolate-covered caramel patties a salesman was hawking looked like turtles. Though the name stuck, these days most turtles we encounter are just dull brown blobs with no more resemblance to a reptile than a burrito (Spanish for “small donkey”) has to an ass. But when we stepped into Turtle Alley Chocolates, a charming candy shop in Gloucester, Massachusetts, the moniker started to make sense. The turtles here exude chelonian personality, the nuts peeking out like flippers from underneath glossy chocolate shells. Made by placing a nut-spangled round of soft homemade caramel atop a hand-molded chocolate base, then funneling on a bit more chocolate, each candy is as singular as a snowflake. While no match for nature with its upward of 330 species of hard-shelled reptiles, Turtle Alley proprietor Hallie Baker, who opened the store in 1999, is the creator of an ever-expanding turtle population with unpredictable physiognomy that includes domestic white, milk, and dark chocolates; gargantuan roasted macadamias, cashews, and almonds, in addition to pecans; and under-the-shell surprises that range from East Coast cranberries to chipotle chile, Turkish apricots, and bacon. “What I love most about the turtle is that it’s a launching pad for so many different combinations,” Baker says. “Whenever I find a great new product, chances are it will inspire a turtle.” When we last visited, she only recently had come across extraordinarily delicious dried strawberries. When she combined them with milk chocolate, pecans from Georgia, and her buttery caramel, a new luxury turtle was born. Although some of what Baker makes is seasonal—cranberry-pecan turtles are generally a fall and winter offering, and white chocolate-blueberry a spring and summer combo—you can special order any flavor in her repertoire any time. Baker believes that the secret of turtle excellence is balance. Her caramel is especially supple, a gentle presence that provides a tender counterpoint to the crunch of the nuts, which are covered by just enough chocolate to ensure their maximum exposure. “If you are using good nuts, fully enrobed turtles are a mistake,” Baker says. “Underneath the veil of chocolate, those nuts are going soft. That’s why I want them sticking out as much as possible. A turtle needs to breathe.” Turtles cost \$24 a pound and can be purchased at turtlealley.com. 🐢

MICHAEL KRAUS

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INTERVIEW



Above: Waiter Mario Alvarado prepares bananas Foster (see page 56 for a recipe) at Brennan's in New Orleans' French Quarter. Facing page: the seafood platter (grilled drum fish, shrimp coleslaw, baked oysters, shrimp corn bread, and a panéed scallop) at Brigtsen's uptown.

ORLEANS

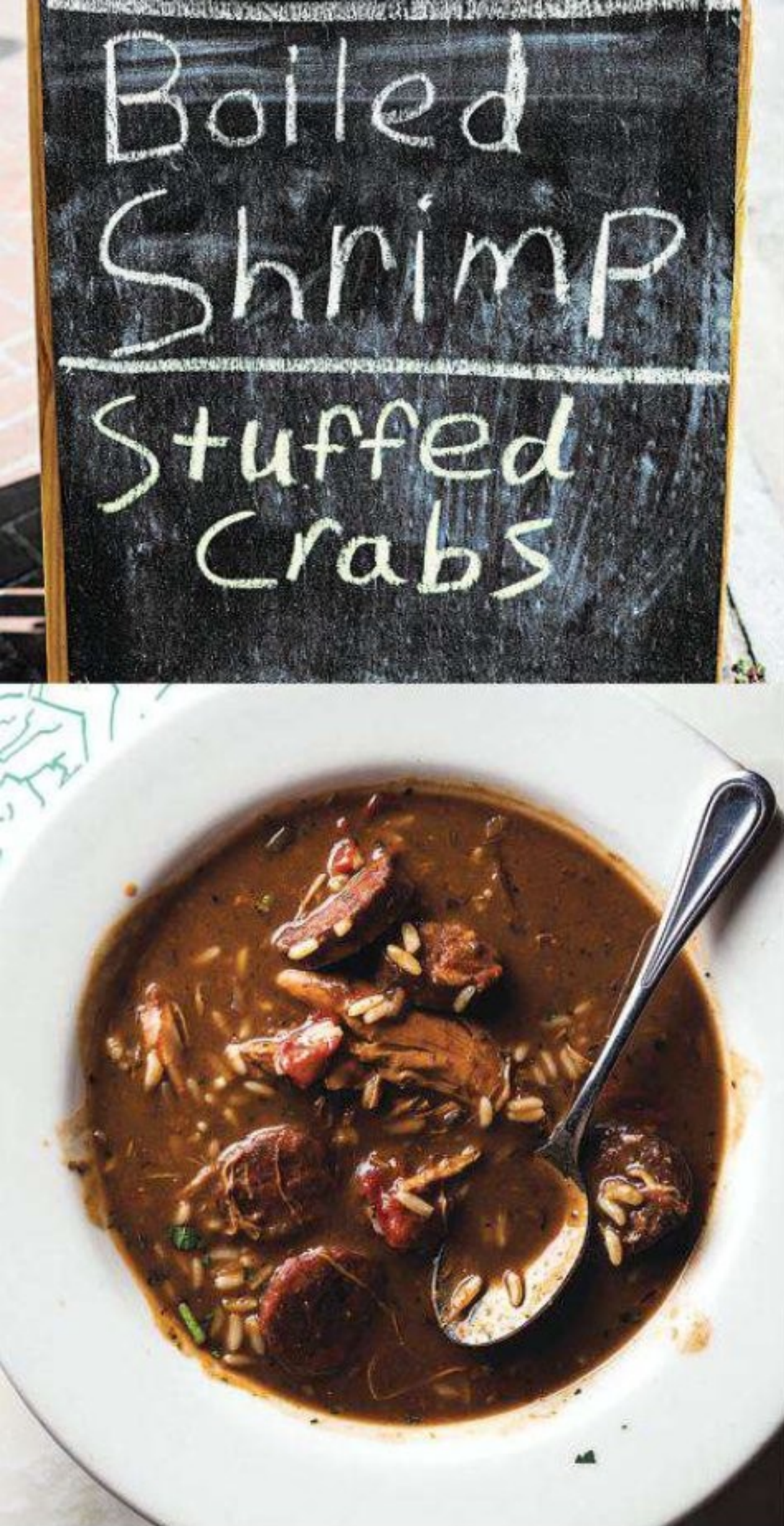


EATANTS



From left: Dalila Garcia, a server at the Morning Call Coffee Stand in Metairie, Louisiana; crawfish étouffée at Bon Ton Cafe in New Orleans' Warehouse District (see page 58 for a recipe).

**THE BEST DISHES, GRANDEST PLACES,
AND MOST COLORFUL CULINARY
HISTORY: THE HERITAGE OF BIG EASY
DINING IS ALIVE, WELL, AND THRIVING
STORY BY LOLIS ERIC ELIE,
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TODD COLEMAN**



From top: a chalkboard menu; Mr. B's Bistro's gumbo ya-ya; fish cutter Anna Mae Williams at New Orleans Fish House, with a black puppy drum fish. Facing page: Cajun seafood boil including crawfish, corn, potatoes, and shrimp at Charlie's Seafood. (See [page 56](#) for recipes.)



In 1948, Louis Armstrong, my city's most famous jazz practitioner, told *DownBeat* magazine: "I always think of them fine old cats way down in New Orleans...and when I play my music, that's what I'm listening to. The way they phrased so pretty and always on the melody, and none of that out-of-the-world music, that pipe-dream music, that whole modern malice." ♣ I came late to Louis Armstrong, at least for a New Orleanian. I spent my high school years training to be a jazz musician. But I was more interested in Miles Davis's modernity than in Armstrong's tradition. It wasn't until years later that I realized the genius of Armstrong: his phrasing, his bravura, his audible insistence on technique.

By contrast, I came to the classic New Orleans restaurants early. My parents were among the first in their families to become professionals and thus make good on the promises of desegregation. Wanting the best for themselves and their children, they took my sister and me to the finest restaurants to celebrate birthdays and graduations. We'd dress in our Sunday clothes and sit beneath the chandeliers at Brennan's, a 67-year-old restaurant in the French Quarter, where the gumbo was presented in a metal cup, and the bow-tied waiter served it to us, rich with shrimp, crab, and oysters. The entrée might be trout amandine, the white filet moist within its nutty crust, or at brunch, eggs Hussarde, one-upping Benedict with the addition of red wine sauce laden with ham and mushrooms. For dessert, we'd move on to bananas Foster, decadent with butter and brown sugar, and flambéed in front of us on a burner in the dining room. The waiter never failed to astonish me when he poured in rum and banana liqueur and tipped the pan toward the fire to ignite that flaming finale.

I can't say we had our own account at Galatoire's, the bastion of the leisurely Friday lunch, or our own waiter at Antoine's, the city's oldest restaurant. These were the hallmarks of the truly well-heeled families of old New Orleans.

But my parents afforded the occasional extravagance. Then they sent me away to college.

After a decade of working and studying in other American cities, I returned to New Orleans and its restaurants, but not to the old places. In the 1990s I was interested in trends: truffle oil, peekytoe crab, fingerling potatoes—ingredients that young maverick chefs were using to make their names. When visitors came to town, I steered them away from "the places your grandfather would take you," as I called them. Turtle soup, barbecued shrimp, bread pudding: There was little sense of discovery for me in the dishes I had been raised on, which as far as I understood them, hadn't changed much in more than a century.

But then a funny thing happened: I got older. I won't quite say I'm grandfather age, but I am old enough that it had been years since I'd been to these classic restaurants. I wondered if I knew anymore what was going on beyond their doors. The city had certainly changed: Hurricane Katrina had scooped out New Orleans and sent its survivors scattering. Many restaurants, both new and old, closed, and newcomers have arrived in their place. The face of the city is changing, and so is the cuisine. I suddenly felt (continued on [page 44](#))

LOLIS ERIC ELIE's most recent story for *SAVEUR* was "Grillades and Grits" (October 2012).

BRENNAN'S, CIRCA 1969 Chef Paul Blangé (pictured at right, third from the right) poses with his staff, including current executive chef Lazone Randolph (far left). The Dutch-born Blangé, the creator of such Brennan's signatures as eggs Hussarde and bananas Foster, was so identified with the place that it is said when he died, he was buried with a Brennan's menu. His ghost allegedly haunts the French Quarter restaurant to this day.



TODD COLEMAN/COURTESY ELLA BRENNAN







A packed house at Galatoire's for Friday lunch, a weekly ritual at the 108-year-old restaurant in New Orleans' French Quarter.

OYSTER CITY

As I found out while photographing this story, New Orleans is an oyster lover's town: They're emblematic, hungrily sought after, and seemingly everywhere. At the raw bar at Pascal's Manale, shucker Thomas Stewart opens them by the thousand to be eaten the Gulf way: raw on a saltine with hot sauce and horseradish. The white-tiled oyster sanctuary Casamento's charbroils them, each shell a vessel for gurgling butter, garlic, and Parmesan cheese. At Upperline, they're deep-fried and served atop a zesty, garlicky sauce. My oyster consumption reached a fever pitch with the Antoine's platter known as the 2-2-2: oysters Bienville, baked in a white wine-cream sauce; Rockefeller, smothered in puréed greens; and Thermidor, with bacon and tomato sauce. New Orleans' oyster cookery is so evolved largely due to abundance: Louisiana is a prolific oyster-producing state. (Though 2010's Deepwater Horizon oil spill and its cleanup decimated the mollusks, populations are bouncing back.) The type in the Gulf of Mexico, *Crassostrea virginica*, are large, plump, mild specimens that lend themselves well to both raw and cooked preparations. Early on, the plentiful mollusks were swapped in for escargots in Creole versions of classic French dishes, and cooks kept going from there. Tenney Flynn, the co-owner and chef of the seafood restaurant GW Fins, took me to P&J Oyster Company, a supplier since 1876. At 7 A.M., brothers Al and Sal Sunseri, P&J's proprietors, plied us with oysters, while Sal explained what he looks for in one. "Louisiana oystermen say they're looking for a 'cock' oyster, because it has the colors, like purple and copper, you'd see on a cockleshell. Those show that the oyster's feeding well, and everything's salty and good—all you have to do is suck it up." —Todd Coleman

(continued from page 40) protective of the traditional restaurants, worried that they, too, would disappear. What did these old-line places have to offer anymore? I decided to return to them and see.

I have to admit, I adored what I found. The roots of many of these kitchens is Creole cooking, a cuisine developed over the centuries in New Orleans, with its West African ingredients and techniques, its butter-drenched classic French foundation, its Spanish and other melting-pot layers (see "Creole Versus Cajun," page 51). It's a cuisine in the service of simple deliciousness. As for the ambience, a lot of these places haven't changed their look for 50 years; to sit in Antoine's with its hand-painted wallpaper and fireplaces and historic photographs is to feel like a time traveler, a favorite sport in my nostalgia-steeped city. And they haven't changed their style of service, either; there is a clear desire to entertain and to please.

ON A RECENT Sunday at Brennan's, the house was as packed as I remembered it from my childhood. Of the 550 seats in the restaurant, the only ones empty were at tables being bussed for the next diners. All around me, tourists and locals alike were digging into the flavors of old New Orleans. Such a meal officially starts with gumbo, the city's signature soup, as thick and rich as any stew. Brennan's refined version eschews the roux, that French combination of flour and fat that colors, flavors, and thickens most of the city's gumbos. Rather, this gumbo is thickened West African style, with okra. Unlike in the darker, murkier

gumbos that have come to dominate around town, I could see the crab and shrimp and okra and taste them distinctly, but they were all harmonizing, all in tune.

To truly test the ancient waters, I ordered an old warhorse, filet Stanley. An unlikely pairing of grilled steak and sautéed bananas draped in horseradish sauce, it didn't taste arcane; with its sharp, sweet, and mineral flavors, it tasted as novel and delicious as it must have six decades ago when Owen E. Brennan put the 19th-century dish on his menu in honor of the protagonist of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

I wandered outside to the restaurant's elegant brick courtyard, the de facto waiting area, where dozens of people were enjoying their bloody marys and brandy milk punches. I could easily imagine this scene playing out in the 1950s, only the gentlemen would have been in white suits, the ladies in linen dresses. These days things are much more casual. None of these restaurants require gentlemen to wear ties anymore. None refuse service to ladies in pants. The air of strict formality faded slowly from New Orleans restaurants, then disappeared all at once.

"After Katrina not everybody was carrying coats and ties, so we sized it down," Eddie Tassin, who has been a waiter at Antoine's for nearly 30 years, told me. "You get a few that say, 'They should still have kept it the same.' But if we'd have kept it the same, we might not still be open."

Tassin was serving me a plate of scalding-hot oysters Rockefeller, or as the menu refers to them, "huitres en coquille a la Rockefeller (notre creation)." In good years, Louisiana leads the nation in oyster production, and there are a number of essential Creole dishes based on the

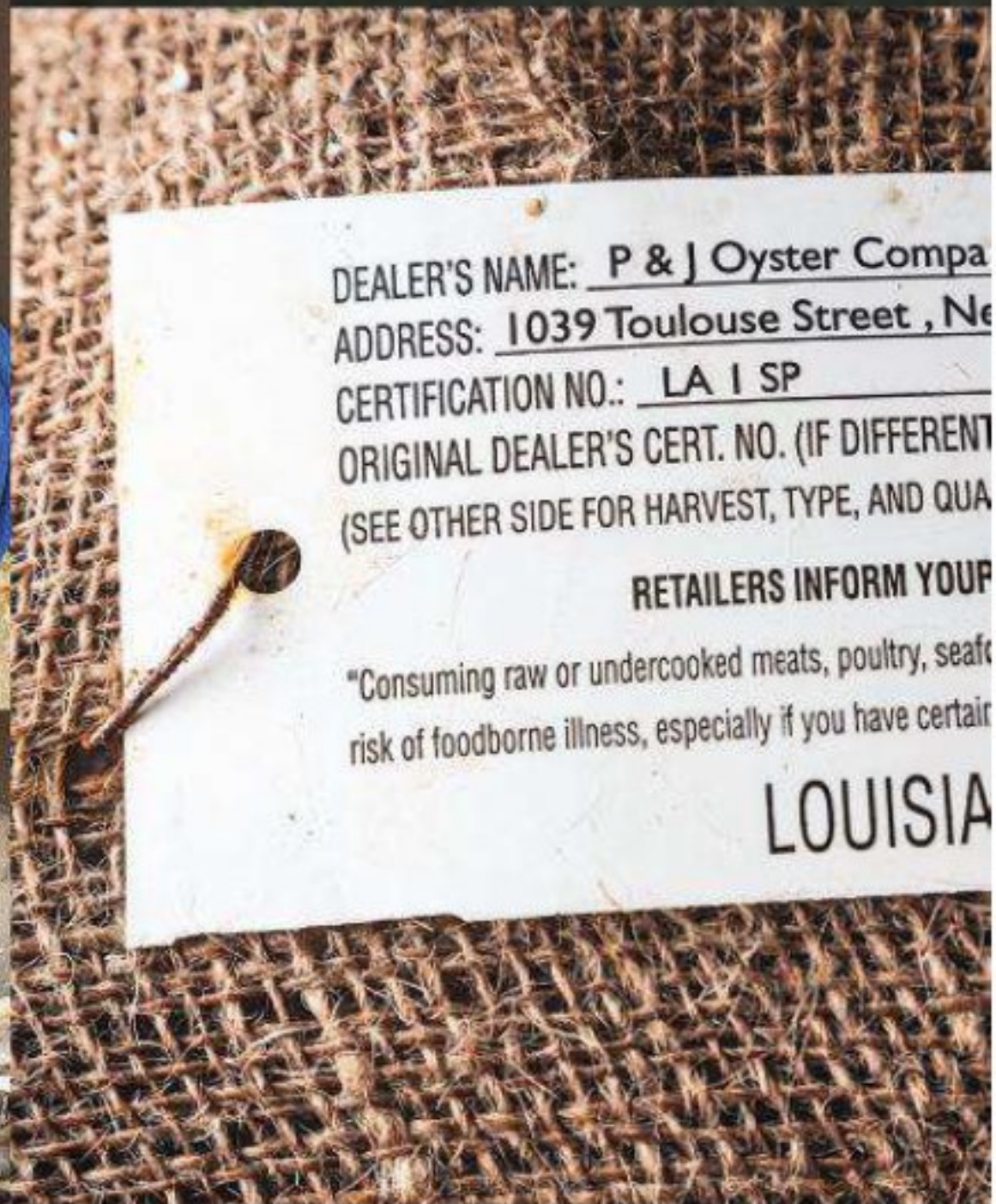


theme of oysters on the half shell, topped with a sauce and baked (see "Oyster City," above). Oysters Rockefeller is the king of the genre, invented at Antoine's in 1889 and named for John D. Rockefeller, then the country's richest man. The mounds of seasoned puréed greens under which my oysters were buried were perfumed with anise-flavored liqueur. Contrary to popular myth, the original (and secret) recipe contains no spinach. Concurrent with popular opinion, it is delectable.

But my favorite oyster dish, oysters *en brochette*—skewered with bacon, lightly battered, and deep-fried—I discovered when I ate at Galatoire's, the clubby Quarter restaurant where upper-crust locals like to kick off their weekend on Friday afternoon. It was a Wednesday when I went, so I walked right in and ate my oysters in shirtsleeves, a sea change for a restaurant whose no-reservations policy and old-fashioned dress code were once legendary. Stories abound of notables such as President Gerald Ford, French president Charles de Gaulle, and many others. (continued on page 51)

BON TON CAFE 1970 Alvin Pierce, pictured at right, arrived with his wife, Alzina, in New Orleans in the 1940s, bringing with him the recipes they grew up on in the bayou parishes of Lafourche and Terrebonne: crawfish étouffée, crawfish bisque, and oysters. Using these dishes as a foundation, in 1953 they opened Bon Ton Cafe, one of the first Cajun establishments in New Orleans.





Clockwise, from top left: Antoine's 2-2-2: oysters Rockefeller, Bienville, and Thermidor; outside Casamento's; charbroiled oysters at Casamento's; P&J Oyster Company's certification; Upperline's oysters St. Claude; raw oysters at Pascale's Manale; P&J's Blake Sunseri; an old oyster bar sign; P&J's Jerry Williams. Facing page: Casamento's oyster loaf. (See [page 56](#) for recipes.)

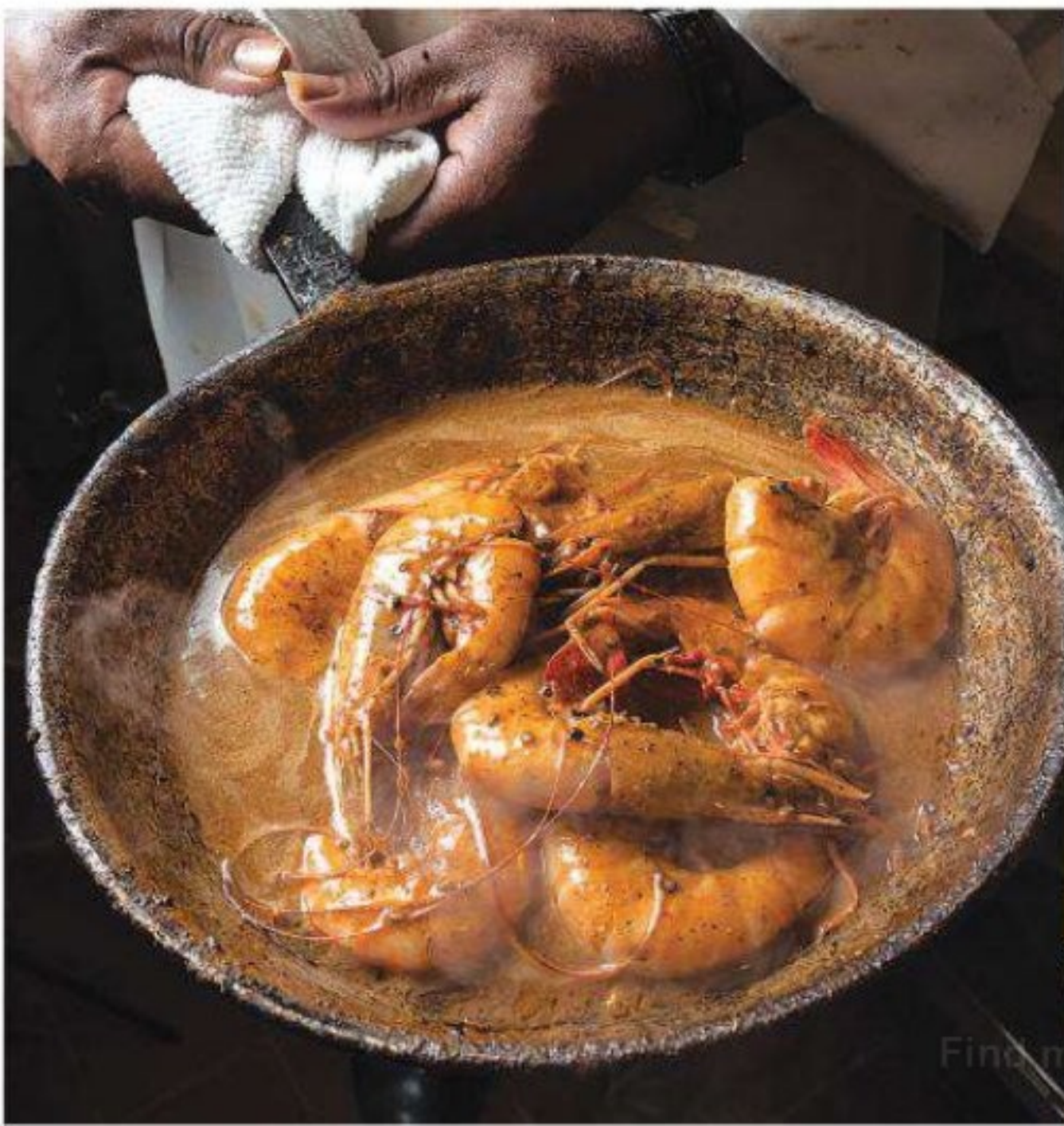




Above: Sterling Constant, a server at Antoine's for 45 years. Facing page: Cooks Tommy Finch, Luke Hidalgo, and Ben McCreary in the kitchen at Commander's Palace.



Clockwise, from top left: turtle soup; pompano *en papillote* at Tommy's Cuisine; Café du Monde's beignets and café au lait; barbecued shrimp at Mr. B's Bistro; Galatoire's server Charlie Grimaldi. Facing page: Commander's Palace's shrimp and tasso Henican. (See [page 56](#) for recipes.)







Customer Galen Brown, back to the camera, dines with his extended family at Tujague's, a French Quarter restaurant open since the 1850s.

(continued from page 44) Gaille, and Mick Jagger being made to wait on the sidewalk for a table, and wear one of the notoriously ill-fitting jackets the restaurant kept to clothe underdressed gentlemen. Despite its bending to 21st-century fashions (at least at lunchtime), Galatoire's holds firm on its food: The signature *pommes soufflées*, potatoes twice fried so they plump like zeppelins, are as crisp and golden as ever, the béarnaise sauce just as creamy and fragrant with tarragon. And the atmosphere, fueled by table-hopping regulars, is just as festive.

Like so many of New Orleans' older establishments, Galatoire's, opened in 1905 by Jean Galatoire, who hailed from Pardies, France, has always aspired to Gallic standards of fine dining. But not all of classic New Orleans is so highfalutin. Though raw oysters are iconic New Orleans, you won't see them shucked at the city's older white tablecloth restaurants; the kitchens are tucked discreetly away. Looking for a break from the pomp of the Quarter, I ventured uptown to Casamento's, a narrow, tile-floored storefront where the shells have been pried open in full view at the counter since 1919. Their signature is the oyster loaf, a slew of Gulf oysters breaded in corn flour and served on thick white slices of bread. CJ Gerdes, the owner and chief fry cook, says he uses only the largest oysters so the meat stays tender in the heat. He insists on frying them, and everything else, in lard for the golden color and savory flavor it imparts.

Casamento's is among a handful of vintage New Orleans restaurants with roots not in France but in Italy, where Gerdes' grandfather and predecessor, Joe Casamento, was born. Other such places, like the fancier Tommy's Cuisine, serve Italian dishes such as chicken rosemarino, roasted in white wine, olive oil, and rosemary-laced *jus*, with a side of pasta, alongside more Gallic-style fare like pompano *en papillote*, baked with crabmeat in a delectable cream sauce.

Then there are the dining stalwarts that have origins just a little more than 100 miles west in Louisiana's Cajun country, settled by French Canadians in the mid-18th century. Those folks lived off the bounty of the land, hunting wild animals in the fields and the bayou, and also raising pigs, and their cuisine also influences the city's. Andouille and

CREOLE VERSUS CAJUN

As a New Orleans chef, I am often asked to explain the distinction between Creole and Cajun, Louisiana's famous cuisines. It's the difference, I always say, between city and country tables. Creole, from the Spanish *criollo*, meaning "native to a place," evolved across nearly 300 years in New Orleans—a city founded in 1718 by the French, ruled soon after by the Spanish, and home over the centuries to arrivals from all over Europe, West Africa, the Canary Islands, and the Caribbean. Creole food is classically French in spirit, exemplified by rich dishes such as shrimp *rémoulade* and trout *meunière*. But it borrows elements from the cooking of all of the city's populations. Spaniards brought the bell peppers that, along with onions and celery, compose the "holy trinity," Creole's version of a mirepoix, the flavor base of so many dishes. Sicilians introduced canned tomatoes, commonly used in Creole sauces. Filé (ground sassafras leaves), an earthy gumbo thickener, comes from Native Americans; okra is African, while spicy cayenne is Caribbean. Cajun food, on the other hand, has its origins in the countryside of southwest Louisiana, called Acadiana, where the Catholic French colonists of Acadie (Nova Scotia) started settling in the 1750s when they were expelled from Canada by the British. There, they continued their traditional ways, trapping, fishing, and pig farming. Though also French-based with multicultural influences, Cajun cuisine is founded on hearty one-pot cooking and rustic ingredients—salt pork, corn, and wild game and seafood. Soups and stews are built on a long-cooked roux made with lard or oil—darker and more intense than the butter-based Creole version. Cajun cooking wasn't familiar to city folks until Paul Prudhomme and other Acadiana-born chefs popularized it in the 1970s, but the ubiquity of crawfish, pork products, and deeply colored gumbo show how thoroughly New Orleanians have embraced this rural cuisine. —Frank Brigtsen

boudin sausages, and the spiced smoked ham called tasso—pork-based building blocks of the Cajun larder—often appear on New Orleans menus. My father first took me to the 60-year-old Bon Ton Cafe, likely the city's first Cajun restaurant, more than 20 years ago. On a recent visit, we were both pleased to see that the food had held up. I would say that the crawfish *étouffée*, smothered in a sauce chunky with vegetables and bacon, spiced with paprika and cayenne, has a buttery richness, but Wayne Pierce, the nephew of the founders, takes a non-Creole stance on butter; he doesn't much use it. Yet the fare at Bon Ton has, over the years, taken on something of a Creole character: Sitting on the red checked tablecloth was a carafe of sherry, an extra jolt for our turtle soup, a throwback dish in most other places but not in New Orleans. Bon Ton's version of this mainstay is thick with tomatoes, unlike the thinner versions I've tasted in Cajun country.

IN THIS ERA of celebrity chefs, many of New Orleans' most vaunted kitchens aren't helmed by stars, but by cooks who have come up through the ranks without culinary degrees or European stages. Most of them are African-American. Dot Hall, Lazone Randolph, and Milton Prudence, the chefs at Bon Ton, Bren-

nan's, and Tommy's Cuisine respectively, are largely anonymous, though the proof of their expertise is on the plates.

That's not to say there aren't tradition-minded chefs whose names are recognized in New Orleans. Many of them own their own places. Frank Brigtsen, of the beloved Brigtsen's and the new Charlie's Seafood, both uptown, has been turning out loyal renditions of Creole and Cajun classics for the past 27 years, dishes like pan-fried drum fish with shrimp Diane sauce enriched with cayenne and other Creole seasonings. At one or two of the old-line places, too, chefs have become stars. At Commander's Palace, these include Paul Prudhomme, Emeril Lagasse, and the current chef, Tory McPhail. It's a sign that they do things a bit differently. In the airy Garden District restaurant, I devoured a Commander's original: shrimp and tasso Henican, the ham-stuffed shrimp and pickled okra arranged in a pattern resembling a fleur-de-lys, the city's symbol, atop a sauce flavored with pepper jelly. It wasn't a traditional dish, but with its regional ingredients and references, it was New Orleans through and through. In the cookbook *Commander's Kitchen* (Clarkson Potter, 2000), Ti Martin, who runs the place with her cousin Lally Brennan, writes of one mash-up of beloved local foods: "When we called it poached eggs with red bean sauce and pickled pork hash cakes, we couldn't give it away. But when we renamed it eggs Louis Armstrong, it started flying out of the kitchen." Like Louis Armstrong, Commander's and the rest of these restaurants have stubbornly defined their own standards, and the standards of New

COMMANDER'S PALACE 1974 In a city that prides itself on its music as much as its cuisine, the jazz brunch is a standard. As the story goes, Commander's Palace co-owner Dick Brennan, inspired by a band he had heard play in the lobby of a London hotel one Sunday before lunch, introduced the concept at his restaurant in the early '70s. Trumpeter Alvin Alcorn, pictured at right with his trio, serenaded clientele dining on lavish dishes like eggs Sardou and sipping brandy milk punch.







From left: Ted Brennan and his daughter Alana Brennan Mueller at Brennan's; Ella Brennan and her nephew Pip Brennan at Brennan's, in a photo on page 104 of *American Cooking: Creole and Acadian* (Time-Life, 1971). Facing page: eggs Hussarde at Brennan's (see page 56 for a recipe).

FAMILY STYLE

In the photo in Time-Life's 1971 *American Cooking: Creole and Acadian* (above, right), Ella Brennan stands behind her nephew Pip and a table loaded with "typical breakfast items"—including chilled rosé—on a balcony overlooking the courtyard at their French Quarter restaurant, Brennan's. But something doesn't look right. The woman who, to many, represents New Orleans hospitality, appears far too stern. When it comes to how the city eats out, Ella Brennan has been an influential person for more than half a century, matriarch of a dynasty of restaurateurs whose establishments define a kind of quintessential New Orleans dining. It started in 1943, when Ella's older brother Owen opened Brennan's in the French Quarter. With its lavish music-filled brunches and elegant service, Brennan's captured all that was grand about eating in New Orleans and almost overnight became the city's most important restaurant. After Owen's death, Ella took control. Then in 1974 after a family split (Pip's brother Ted, shown above with his daughter Alana Brennan Mueller, owns Brennan's today; the two sides of the family do not speak), she decamped with most of her siblings to the Garden District, where they had bought the century-old Commander's Palace. The laboratory for Ella's experiments in cuisine and hospitality, Commander's launched the careers of influential chefs including Paul Prudhomme and Emeril Lagasse, and its kitchen created dozens of iconic, beloved dishes—shrimp and tasso Henican, eggs Louis Armstrong, and more. Today, though Ella, age 87, is effectively retired, her children, nieces, and nephews preside over a local empire of 13 restaurants that constitute a bona fide genre in New Orleans. Different cousins own different places, and some are more posh than others, but each showcases the family's trademark style. There's always a Brennan in charge: Cindy Brennan Davis at Mr. B's Bistro; Ella's daughter Ti Martin and her cousin Lally Brennan splitting duties between Commander's Palace, Café Adelaide, and the new Sobou. On the menu, you may find a gumbo or a sherry-drizzled turtle soup. The list of entrées may feature Louisiana seafood, from oysters Rockefeller to sautéed Gulf fish topped with lump crabmeat. For a sweet finish, there may be some riff on bread pudding, perhaps topped with cherries jubilee or reimagined as an ethereal soufflé. At the fancier places, your meal will be served "gang style" in a well-choreographed routine wherein a group of waiters float to your table, set down the plates in unison, and retreat before you can pick up your fork. And in keeping with family tradition, a midday cocktail is always encouraged. Though it's out of fashion elsewhere in the country, there's still nothing quite like a three martini lunch (the house limit, at 25 cents a drink) at Commander's: It makes you feel like you're getting away with something, even in a city that revels in its excesses. —Pableaux Johnson

Orleans. They've got integrity that, if you allow it to, proves irresistible.

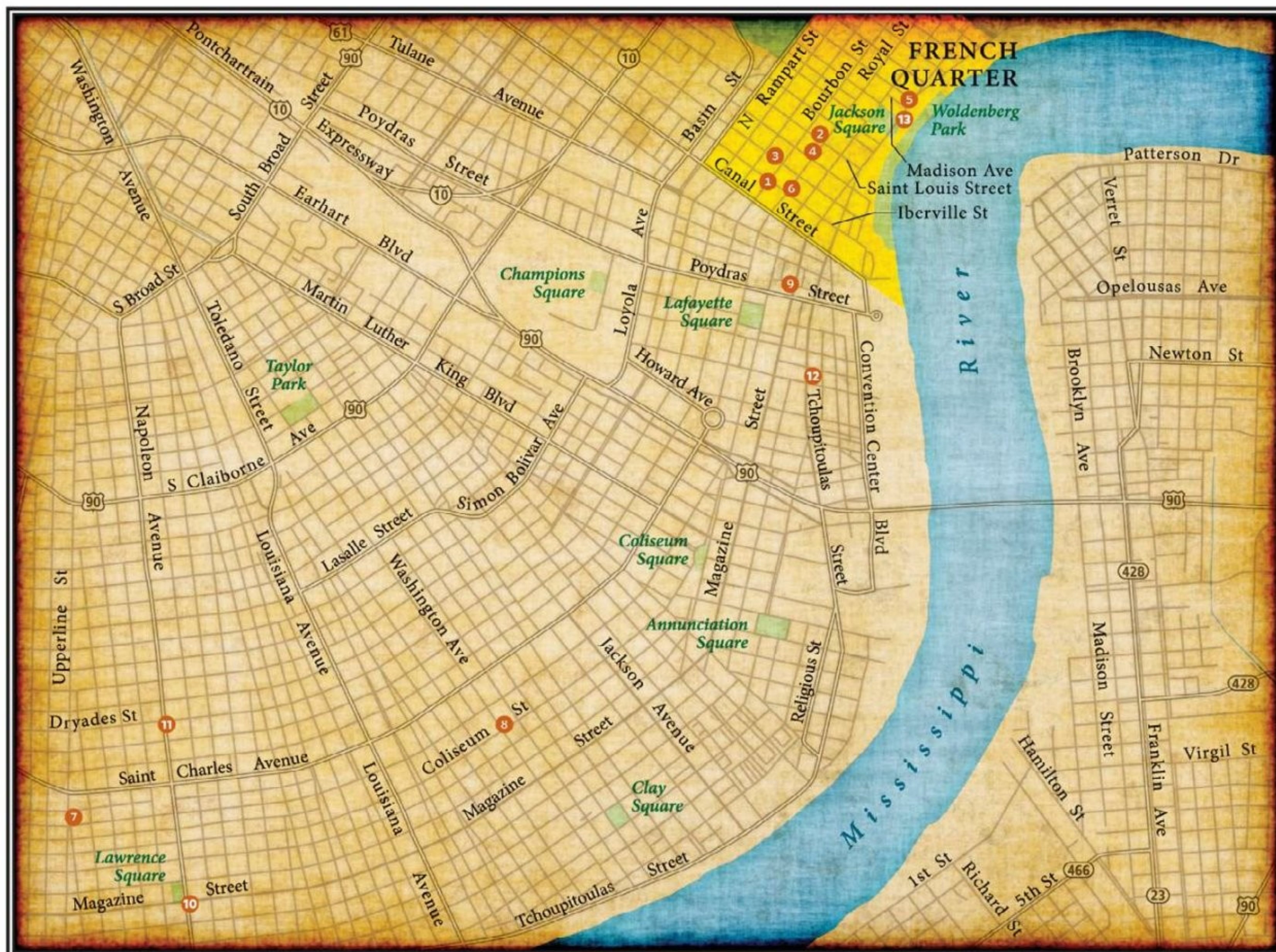
One evening after dinner, I sat amid the mirrors and polished wood in the French 75 Bar, which is attached to the classic Creole restaurant Arnaud's. Revived by the craft cocktail craze, the pre-Prohibition bar was packed with young cognoscenti. Once having dismissed such places, now I wanted to implore the crowd around me to explore Arnaud's menu, too, to mine it for its age-old delights. I thought of Louis Armstrong then; he was considered old school, but the man had a record, "What a Wonderful World," that became a hit more than a decade after he died.

It had been only upon reexamination that I could see Armstrong as the innovator that he was. When I speak of these classic places, I still describe them as the spots your grandfather would have taken you to. It's an apt description, but tasting the food now, I realize it's also an insufficient one. In the hands of these experienced cooks, served with dignity and eaten amid the trappings of New Orleans history, the time-tested recipes still shine.

Finishing my drink, I recalled something I had noticed a few days before in a dining room at Antoine's. There, the walls are crowded with framed celebrity tributes dating back more than a century. One is by Carl Anderson, who created the popular "Henry" comic strip in the 1930s.

"Henry speaks for the first time," Anderson says in a caption beneath a drawing of his famously silent character. In the bubble above, Henry says one word: "Grand."

MICHAEL KRAUS (BOOK)



CLASSIC NEW ORLEANS

Founded in 1718 by French colonists who saw the promise of commerce in this soft, curving land near the base of the Mississippi River, New Orleans has always been a city of entrepreneurs and idealists, the gutsy and the fanciful. Spain arrived. And Africa. Sicily, the Caribbean, and others. The creative interplay between cultures gave birth to the jazz, Mardi Gras, and incomparable cuisine that make this place extraordinary. Hurricane Katrina dealt a blow in 2005—the current population (around 360,000 in 2011) falls far short of prestorm numbers. Yet, from the historic French Quarter at the city's heart to the tree-shaded boulevards of Uptown to its west, the streets of shotgun houses in the Bywater to the east, the Treme to the north, and beyond, the music remains strong. The pagentry is spectacular. And the classic restaurants—Creole, Cajun, and otherwise—make food that's as delicious and vibrant as ever. Here are some of our favorite legendary places to eat, drink, and stay in New Orleans. —Sara Roahen

Restaurants

The lion's share of old-school New Orleans dining rooms is located in the French Quarter, where the zing of paprika-laced shrimp rémoulade punctuates the Friday lunch at the centenarian **1 GALATOIRE'S** (209 Bourbon Street; 504/525-2021; galatoires.com). **2 ANTOINE'S** (713 St. Louis Street; 504/581-4422; antoiness.com), the originator in 1889 of oysters Rockefeller, spoils patrons with butter-soaked seafood like trout Pontchartrain topped with

lump crabmeat. Between courses of Pernod-spiked escargots *en casserole* and buttery speckled trout meunière at **3 ARNAUD'S** (813 Rue Bienville; 504/523-5433; arnaudsrestaurant.com), diners may tour the restaurant's Mardi Gras museum, a spectacle of scepters and gowns. Nearby **4 BRENNAN'S** (417 Royal Street; 504/525-9711; brennansneworleans.com) is most beloved for its multicourse breakfasts (cocktails encouraged) and flaming bananas Foster. Rounding out the

French Quarter's quintet of classic Creole restaurants, **5 TUJAGUE'S** (823 Decatur Street; 504/525-8676; tujaguesrestaurant.com) is the biggest stickler for tradition, offering only a six-course table d'hôte menu at dinnertime, with specialties like brisket in spicy Creole sauce; its standing-room-only bar serves up red beans and rice on Monday nights.

Gumbo remains a constant in the city's classic restaurants, high-end and hole-in-the-wall

alike. A gumbo excursionist can eat for days without ever tasting the same gumbo twice, from the version made with seafood and chaurice sausage (a Creole chorizo) at **DOOKY CHASE** (2301 Orleans Avenue; 504/821-0600; dookychaserestaurant.com), the restaurant that desegregated fine dining during the Civil Rights era, to the turkey and andouille gumbo at Uptown's beloved **YE OLDE COLLEGE INN** (3000 S. Carrollton Avenue; 504/866-3683; collegeinn1933.com). **6 MR. B'S BISTRO** (201 Royal Street; 504/523-2078; mrbsbistro.com) in the Quarter is famous for its gumbo ya-ya. The dish, whose name is Creole slang for "all talking at once," is chockful of chicken and sausage in a dark long-cooked roux. A few miles uptown at **7 UPPERLINE** (1413 Upperline Street; 504/891-9822; upperline.com), the signature is a rich duck and andouille gumbo.

Farther along, in Riverbend, Frank Brigtsen uses filé (cured and ground sassafras leaves), a seasoning and thickener adopted from the Choctaw Indians, in a refined gumbo made with rabbit at **BRIGTSSEN'S** (723 Dante Street; 504/861-7610; brigtsens.com). At **CHARLIE'S SEAFOOD** (8311 Jefferson Highway; 504/737-3700; charliesseafoodrestaurant.com), Brigtsen's casual spot out west in Harahan, he prepares it homestyle with okra, shrimp, and oysters. You never know what style of gumbo might be in the pot at **8 COMMANDER'S PALACE** (1403 Washington Avenue; 504/899-8221; commanderspalace.com), the Garden District Creole grande dame, which offers a rotating selection of the Creole soup, along with originals like bread pudding soufflé. The gumbo is good, but the crawfish bisque is the soup to try at the Cajun restaurant **9 BONTON CAFE** (401 Magazine Street; 504/524-3386; thebontoncafe.com).

Fried Gulf oysters are po'boy staples, but the bivalves find their true calling in raw form at the city's classic oyster bars, like the no-frills **FELIX'S RESTAURANT & OYSTER BAR** (739 Iberville Street; 504/522-4440). The chatty shuckers consider the gift of gab part of the job at **10 CASAMENTO'S** (4330 Magazine Street; 504/895-9761; casamentosrestaurant.com) and **11 PASCAL'S MANALE** (1838 Napoleon Avenue; 504/895-4877), old-line Italian restaurants and oyster bars whose cuisine arrived from Italy in the late 1800s. Along with chicken rosemarino and veal marsala, the Italian-Creole restaurant **12 TOMMY'S CUISINE** (746 Tchoupitoulas Street; 504/525-4790; tommysneworleans.com), in the Warehouse Arts District just west of the Quarter, features a full slate of traditional Creole dishes such as oysters Bienville and crabmeat Sardou.

For 'round-the-clock coffee and dessert, **13 CAFE DU MONDE** (800 Decatur Street; 504/525-4544; cafedumonde.com) is the

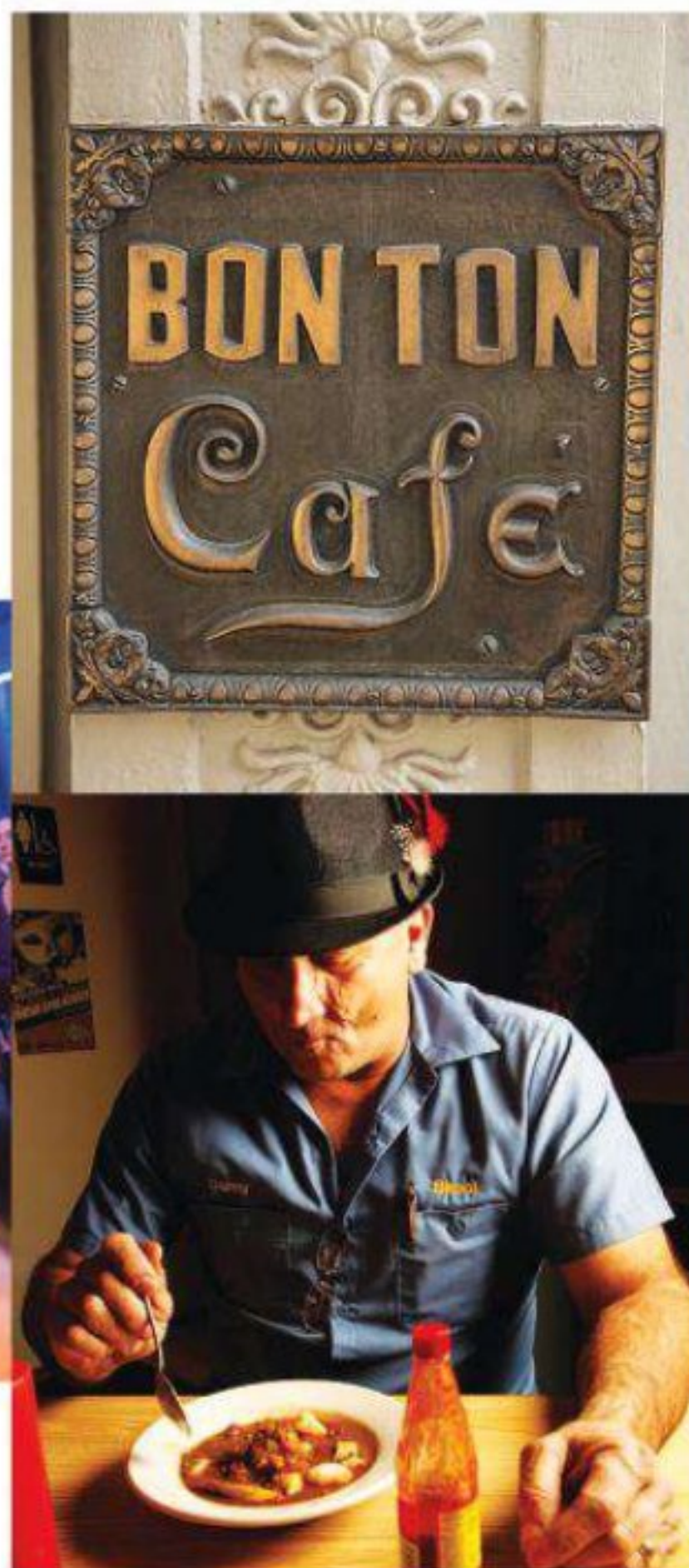
city's most popular attraction. The café's chicory-darkened roast and hot-from-the-fryer beignets are unparalleled—unless you're a partisan of **MORNING CALL COFFEE STAND** (3325 Severn Avenue, Metairie; 504/885-4068; City Park, Timken Center, Dreyfous Drive; 504/300-1157; morningcallcoffeestand.com). The newest location of the 143-year-



old local institution brings café au lait and those powder-sugar New Orleans-style donuts to City Park, the town's ever-improving expanse of green.

Nightlife

The city's storied hotels and restaurants are among the best places for a well-crafted drink. There is no more picturesque spot for enjoying a Sazerac, the city's official cocktail made from rye whiskey, bitters, and liquorice-flavored Herbsaint or absinthe, than the front porch of the Columns Hotel in the Garden District, thanks to its **VICTORIAN LOUNGE BAR** (3811 Saint Charles Avenue; 504/899-9308; thecolumns.com). At the **SWIZZLE STICK BAR** in the Loews Hotel (300 Poydras Street; 504/595-3305; cafeadelaide.com), bar chef Lu Brow revives vintage cocktails like the hair-of-the-dog Corpse Reviver #2, a lemon-spiked combination of gin, Lillet, Cointreau, and absinthe. Another new-wave bartender with old-timey sensibility, Chris Hannah turned the **FRENCH 75 BAR** at Arnaud's (see "Restaurants," facing page) into an international destination by perfecting old favorites and concocting updated New Orleans-inspired ones like the Moviegoer, gin blended with orange curaçao, Averna amaro, and lemon. A few freestanding French Quarter bars also offer worthy tipples. At the **OLD ABSINTHE HOUSE** (240



Bourbon Street; 504/523-3181; oldabsinthethehouse.com), you can sample all manner of Big Easy cocktails—brandy milk punch, Ramos gin fizzes, mint juleps—as well as admire the marble fountains that bartenders once used to drip water over sugar cubes into absinthe.

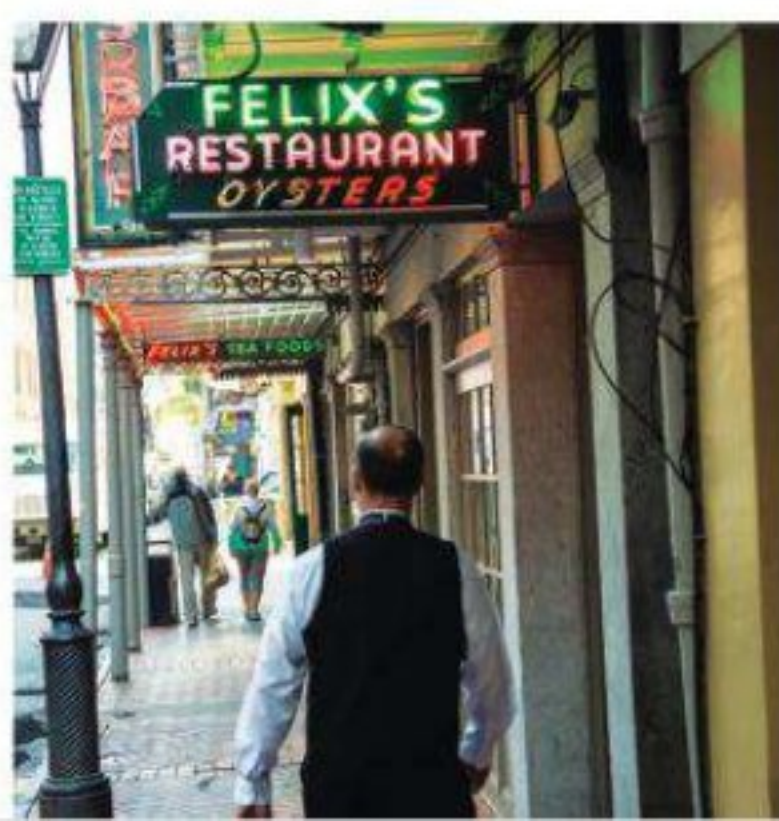
Frenchmen Street in the Faubourg Marigny east of the Quarter is the place to go for a nightcap and its natural New Orleans pairing: music. At **BLUE NILE** (532 Frenchmen Street; 504/948-2583; bluenilelive.com), you might catch country bluesman Washboard Chaz or the raucous Big Sam's Funky Nation, while **THE SPOTTED CAT** (623 Frenchmen Street; 504/258-3135; spottedcatmusicclub.com) features all kinds of jazz. In the Bywater, the iconic trumpeter and singer Kermit Ruffins packs **VAUGHAN'S** (800 Lesseps Street; 504/947-5562) every Thursday night, serving barbecue and red beans as a lagniappe. The Quarter's legendary **PRESERVATION HALL** (726 St. Peter Street; 504/522-2841; preservationhall.com) carries on its mission to preserve and present Dixieland jazz, while uptown at **TIPITINA'S** (501 Napoleon Avenue; 504/895-8477; tipitinas.com), Sundays are usually reserved for a Cajun-style *fais do do*, or dance party.



Clockwise, from lower left: Felix's Restaurant and Oyster Bar; a saxophonist outside the Blue Nile music club on Frenchmen Street; the sign at Bon Ton Cafe; The Pearl Restaurant and Oyster Bar in the French Quarter; the Hotel Monte-leone's rooftop; enjoying seafood okra gumbo at Charlie's Seafood.

Hotels

Though it's only 29 years old, the **WINDSOR COURT** (300 Gravier Street; 504/523-6000; windsorcourthotel.com) drips old Southern luxury, from afternoon teas to lavish marble baths. In the Polo Club Lounge, choose a Vieux Carré cocktail (imagine a dressed-up Manhattan) to accompany the sounds of live music. The restored **ROOSEVELT HOTEL** (123 Baronne Street; 504/648-1200; therooseveltneworleans.com), where Louisiana's notorious Depression-era governor Huey Long allegedly had his own suite, still offers some residential-size accommodations. The Sazerac Bar, with its controversial Paul Ninas murals depicting the Old South, is a fancy setting for the namesake cocktail or a Ramos gin fizz. The **HOTEL MONTELEONE** (214 Royal Street; 504/523-3341; hotelmonteone.com) boasts the Carousel Bar, a revolving bar in the round. Hotel suites are named for writers who loved the place, including Eudora Welty, Tennessee Williams, and Truman Capote.



★ Brennan's Bananas Foster

SERVES 4-6

Banana liqueur heightens the flavor of the bananas in this flambéed dessert (pictured on [page 37](#)) from the New Orleans restaurant Brennan's.

- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup packed brown sugar
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- ¼ cup banana liqueur (see [page 85](#))
- 4 bananas, peeled and quartered
- ¼ cup white rum
- Vanilla ice cream, for serving

Melt butter, sugar, and cinnamon in a 12" heatproof skillet over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring, until sugar is dissolved, 4 minutes. Add liqueur and bananas; cook, until bananas are soft and slightly caramelized, 4-6 minutes. Add rum, and using a match or lighter, ignite to flambé; cook until flame dies out. Spoon bananas and sauce over ice cream.

Brennan's Eggs Hussarde

SERVES 4

This take on eggs Benedict (pictured on [page 52](#)) incorporates a rich red wine sauce.

- 2 cups plus 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 scallion, finely chopped
- ¼ yellow onion, finely chopped
- ¼ cup finely chopped ham
- ¼ cup minced mushrooms
- 1 tbsp. flour
- ¾ cup beef stock
- ¼ cup dry red wine
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. dried thyme
- 1 bay leaf
- ¼ cup finely chopped parsley
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 4 egg yolks, plus 8 poached eggs, for serving
- 1½ tsp. red wine vinegar
- ¼ tsp. cayenne pepper, plus more for serving
- 1 medium tomato, cut into 4 slices
- ⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 8 slices Canadian bacon
- 8 Holland rusks (see [page 85](#))

1 Heat 2 tbsp. butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add garlic, scallions, and onions; cook until soft, 2-3 minutes. Add ham and mushrooms; cook 4 minutes. Add flour; cook, stirring, 1 minute. Add stock, wine, Worcestershire, thyme, and bay leaf; bring to a boil.

Reduce heat to medium; cook briefly until slightly thick. Stir in 2 tbsp. parsley, and season with salt and pepper; keep red wine sauce warm.

2 Heat 2 cups butter in a 2-qt. saucepan over medium-low heat. Skim and discard film from surface. Pour clarified butter from pan into a bowl, leaving milky sediment behind. Fill a 4-qt. saucepan with 2" of water; bring to a simmer over medium heat and rest a heatproof bowl over pan. Add egg yolks, vinegar, cayenne, and 1 tsp. water to the bowl; cook, whisking constantly, until a thick sauce has formed, 4-5 minutes. Begin adding clarified butter in a thin stream, whisking, until all butter has been added to make a smooth hollandaise.

3 Heat oven to broil. Place tomato slices on a baking sheet. Season with salt and pepper, sprinkle with cheese, and broil until cheese is melted and browned, 2-3 minutes; set aside.

4 Heat remaining butter in a 12" skillet over medium heat. Add bacon; cook, until warmed. Divide rusks between 4 plates; put 1 slice bacon on each. Spoon 2 tbsp. red wine sauce over bacon, and top with a poached egg. Spoon hollandaise over eggs. Garnish plates with tomatoes, remaining parsley, and more cayenne.

Brennan's Turtle Soup

SERVES 6-8

The flavor of this silky, rich soup (pictured on [page 48](#)) is heightened by a touch of sherry.

- 1½ lb. boneless turtle meat (see [page 85](#)) or boneless veal shoulder, cut into 2" pieces
- 2 bay leaves
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, minced
- 1 green bell pepper, minced
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- 2½ tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. paprika
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup flour
- ¼ cup finely chopped parsley
- ¾ cup dry sherry
- 2 hard-boiled eggs, chopped
- ½ lemon, thinly sliced

1 Bring turtle meat, bay leaves, and 10 cups water to a boil in a 6-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; cook, covered, until the meat is tender, 2-2½ hours. Strain; reserve stock; finely chop meat and set aside.

2 Heat butter in pan over medium-high heat. Add garlic, celery, onions, and bell peppers; cook until golden, 4-6 minutes. Add paste, Worcestershire, paprika, salt, and pepper; cook 2 minutes. Stir in flour; cook 3 minutes. Add reserved stock; boil. Reduce heat to medium; add turtle meat. Season with salt and pepper. Add parsley, sherry, eggs, and lemon.

Brigtsen's Oysters Bienville

SERVES 2-4

Chef Frank Brigtsen's version of this classic New Orleans oyster dish (pictured on [page 45](#)) includes bacon, ham, and sherry for fuller flavor.

- 1 slice bacon, finely chopped
- ⅓ cup sliced white mushrooms
- 2 oz. ham, finely chopped
- 6 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 6 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- ½ small green bell pepper, finely chopped
- ¼ tsp. dried oregano
- ¼ tsp. dried thyme
- ⅛ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 oz. medium raw shrimp (about 7), finely chopped
- 1½ tbsp. dry sherry
- ⅔ cup heavy cream
- ⅓ cup milk
- ⅓ cup flour
- Coarse rock salt, for pan
- 12 bluepoint oysters, on the half shell
- Lemon wedges, for serving

1 Cook bacon in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat until crisp, 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer bacon to a bowl; set aside. Add mushrooms and ham to skillet and cook until browned, 2 minutes; using a slotted spoon, transfer to bowl with bacon. Add 2 tbsp. butter to skillet; add scallions, celery, onions, garlic, and peppers; cook until soft, about 3 minutes. Add oregano, thyme, cayenne, bay, salt, and pepper; cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add shrimp and sherry; cook, stirring, until just pink, 1-2 minutes. Add cream and milk, and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium and cook until reduced by two-thirds, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool slightly; stir in reserved bacon, mushrooms, and ham. Transfer mixture to a blender and purée until smooth; set aside. Wipe out

skillet and melt remaining butter over medium-high heat; add flour and cook until golden, whisking constantly, 2 minutes. Whisk in reserved purée; remove; let cool to room temperature. Transfer to a pastry bag fitted with a ½" fluted tip and refrigerate until cold, at least 1 hour.

2 Heat broiler to high. Line a baking sheet with rock salt about ¼" deep. Nestle oysters onto bed of rock salt. Pipe filling over oysters; broil until tops are browned, about 4 minutes. Serve with lemon wedges.

Brigtsen's Pan-Fried Drum Fish with Shrimp Diane Sauce

SERVES 4

Local drum fish (pictured on [page 36](#)) are served in a butter-enriched sauce at Brigtsen's in New Orleans. Red snapper works just as well.

- 4 8-oz. filets drum fish
- ¼ cup Creole seasoning (see [page 85](#))
- 9 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 cup sliced cremini mushrooms
- 3 scallions, thinly sliced
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt, to taste
- 3 oz. medium raw shrimp (about 7), peeled and deveined, tails removed
- ¼ cup fish stock
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped parsley, plus more for garnish
- Tabasco, for serving

1 Season fish with half the Creole seasoning; set aside. Melt 3 tbsp. butter in a 12" cast-iron skillet over medium-high heat. Add fish; cook, flipping once, until cooked through, about 8 minutes; transfer to a serving platter and keep warm.

2 Add 2 tbsp. butter to the skillet; return to medium-high heat. Add mushrooms; cook until browned, 2-4 minutes. Add remaining Creole seasoning, plus scallions, garlic, and salt; cook until soft, 3 minutes. Add shrimp and stock; cook until shrimp are just pink, 3 minutes. Whisk in remaining butter, plus parsley, until sauce is smooth. Pour sauce over fish; garnish with more parsley, and serve with hot sauce on the side.

Cajun Seafood Boil

SERVES 6-8

This spicy boil (pictured on [page 41](#)) is inspired by one served at Charlie's Seafood in Harahan, Louisiana.

- 1¼ cups kosher salt

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- 5 lb. whole live crawfish or frozen seasoned, boiled crawfish, thawed (see [page 85](#))
- 6 ribs celery, cut into 3" pieces
- 2 yellow onions, quartered
- 1 head garlic, halved crosswise
- 1 lemon, halved, plus wedges
- ½ cup Creole seasoning (see [page 85](#))
- ½ cup Old Bay Seasoning
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 3 tbsp. cayenne pepper
- 2 lb. medium waxy potatoes
- 3 lb. head-on jumbo shrimp
- 3 ears corn, shucked and halved
- Cocktail sauce, for serving
- Hot sauce, preferably Original Louisiana, for serving

Whisk 1 cup salt in a large stockpot filled with 2 gallons cold water until dissolved. Add the crawfish and let sit 20 minutes; drain, rinse, and chill. Add remaining salt, celery, onions, garlic, halved lemons, Creole seasoning, Old Bay, Worcestershire, cayenne, potatoes, and 2 gallons water to stockpot; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook until potatoes are just tender, 10–12 minutes. Add crawfish, shrimp, and corn; cook, covered, until seafood is cooked through, 5–7 minutes more. Drain contents of pot, discarding the liquid; transfer crawfish, shrimp, potatoes, corn, celery, and onions to a large platter. Serve with lemon wedges and cocktail and hot sauces.

Casamento's Charbroiled Oysters

SERVES 2–4

These Parmesan-topped oysters (pictured on [page 45](#)) can also be grilled.

- Coarse rock salt, for pan
- 12 bluepoint oysters, on the half shell
- 2 tbsp. unsalted butter, melted
- ¼ tsp. finely chopped parsley
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ½ tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- Hot sauce, preferably Tabasco, for serving

Heat broiler to high. Line a baking sheet with rock salt about ¼" deep. Nestle oysters onto bed of rock salt. Mix together butter, parsley, Worcestershire, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Place about 1 tsp. butter mixture over each oyster and top with 1 tbsp. cheese; broil until tops are browned, 3–4 minutes. Serve with hot sauce.

Commander's Palace Shrimp & Tasso Henican

SERVES 6

Red pepper jelly and pickled okra and onions add piquancy to this dish (pictured on [page 49](#)).

- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 cup red wine vinegar
- 2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more
- 1 tsp. whole black peppercorns
- 1 tsp. cumin seeds
- 7 cloves garlic (3 crushed, 4 finely chopped)
- 2 bay leaves
- 2 jalapeños, minced
- 1 each green, red, and yellow bell pepper, minced
- ½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- 1 cup light corn syrup
- 1 cup white vinegar
- 2 tsp. finely chopped parsley
- 2 lb. jumbo shrimp, peeled and deveined, tails removed
- 2 oz. spicy tasso, cut into matchsticks (see [page 85](#))
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tbsp. Creole seasoning (see [page 85](#))
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 9 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 small shallot, finely chopped
- ⅓ cup Crystal hot sauce
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- 12 pickled okra (see [page 85](#))

1 Place sliced onions in a bowl. Bring vinegar, 2 tsp. salt, peppercorns, cumin, crushed garlic, and bay to a boil in a 1-qt. saucepan. Pour over onions; cool pickled onions; chill.

2 Heat a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add peppers and cook until slightly caramelized, 10–12 minutes; transfer to a bowl. Add chile flakes, syrup, and vinegar to the pan; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook until reduced by two-thirds, 10–12 minutes. Stir in peppers and parsley; season with salt. Set pepper jelly aside.

3 Make a ¼" cut down the back of each shrimp; stuff each shrimp with one strip of tasso and secure with a toothpick. Mix flour and Creole seasoning in a bowl. Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, toss shrimp in flour, shaking off excess; fry until just cooked, 3–5 minutes. Transfer shrimp to a bowl; keep warm. Wipe out pan and add 4 tbsp. butter; return to medium-high heat. Add chopped garlic and shallots; cook until soft, 2 minutes. Add hot sauce and cream; cook until reduced by half. Remove from heat and whisk in remaining butter to make a smooth

sauce. Return shrimp to pan; toss with sauce and remove toothpicks.

4 To serve: Divide jelly among 6 plates and arrange shrimp on the plate alternating with pickled okra; garnish with pickled onions.

★ Crawfish Etouffée

SERVES 6–8

In this luscious stew (pictured on [page 39](#)), crawfish tails are cooked with tomatoes, paprika, and cream.

- 4 slices bacon, finely chopped
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 6 scallions, finely chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 2 stalks celery, finely chopped
- 1 yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 large tomato, finely chopped
- 1 green bell pepper, minced
- 1½ tsp. finely chopped thyme
- 1 tsp. paprika
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 2 bay leaves
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ¼ cup flour
- 2½ cups fish or chicken stock
- 2 lb. parcooked peeled crawfish tails (see [page 85](#))
- ⅓ cup heavy cream
- 3 tbsp. Original Louisiana hot sauce, plus more for serving
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- ⅓ cup finely chopped parsley, plus more for garnish
- Cooked white rice

Heat bacon in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat until rendered, 3 minutes. Add butter, scallions, garlic, celery, onions, tomatoes, and peppers; cook until soft, 7 minutes. Stir in thyme, paprika, cayenne, bay, salt, and pepper; cook 1 minute. Stir in flour; cook 2 minutes. Add stock and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium and cook until reduced by one-third, 12 minutes. Add crawfish; cook until hot. Stir in cream, hot sauce, Worcestershire, and parsley; serve with rice and more hot sauce.

★ Mr. B's Barbecued Shrimp

SERVES 2–4

Jumbo peel-and-eat shrimp are bathed in a tangy, spicy butter in this classic dish (pictured on [page 48](#)).

- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter, plus 12 tbsp. cut into ½" cubes and chilled
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- ½ cup Crystal hot sauce
- ¼ cup Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp. Creole seasoning (see [page 85](#))

- 4 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1½ lb. head-on large shrimp, unpeeled
- Kosher salt, to taste
- French bread, for serving

Heat 3 tbsp. butter in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic; cook until soft, 1–2 minutes. Add hot sauce, Worcestershire, juice, Creole seasoning, and pepper. Bring to a simmer; cook until sauce is reduced by half, 5–7 minutes. Add shrimp; cook, flipping once, until cooked through, 3–4 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low; stir in chilled butter to make a smooth sauce. Season with salt. Serve with French bread.

★ Mr. B's Gumbo Ya-Ya

SERVES 8–10

This dark-roux gumbo (pictured on [page 40](#)) originates in Cajun country.

- 1 3½-lb. whole chicken
- 2 medium onions (1 quartered, 1 finely chopped)
- 3 stalks celery (2 halved, 1 finely chopped)
- 2 tbsp. black peppercorns
- 3 bay leaves
- 2 medium carrots, halved
- 2 sprigs thyme
- 16 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1½ cups flour
- 1 each red and green bell pepper, minced
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 lb. andouille sausage, sliced
- 1 tsp. Creole seasoning (see [page 85](#))
- 1 tsp. cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp. dried thyme
- ½ tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- Cooked white rice

1 Bring chicken, quartered onion, halved celery, peppercorns, 2 bay, carrots, thyme sprigs, and 10 cups water to a boil in an 8-qt. saucepan. Reduce heat to medium-low; simmer until chicken is cooked through, 35–40 minutes. Remove chicken; cool, then shred meat. Strain stock; discard solids and set aside.

2 Heat butter in an 8-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Whisk in flour; cook, stirring, to make a dark roux, 18–20 minutes. Add remaining chopped onion, celery, and bay, plus bell peppers, garlic, salt, and pepper; cook, stirring, until soft, 8–10 minutes. Add andouille, Creole seasoning, cayenne, dried thyme, and chile flakes; cook until fat begins to render from sausage, 3–4 minutes. Stir in 5½ cups of reserved

stock (chill remainder for another use); bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook, stirring, until thickened, 8–10 minutes. Add chicken; cook until hot, 2 minutes more. Serve with white rice.

★ Oysters Rockefeller

SERVES 2–4

This ubiquitous New Orleans dish (pictured on [page 45](#)) was invented at Antoine's in 1889.

- 3 tbsp. fresh bread crumbs
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 1 oz. spinach, chopped
- 1 scallion, chopped
- 1 rib celery, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, chopped
- ¼ small yellow onion, chopped
- 2 tsp. Pernod (see [page 85](#))
- 1 tsp. red wine vinegar
- ½ tsp. chopped thyme leaves
- ⅛ tsp. ground anise
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste
- Coarse rock salt, for pan
- 12 bluepoint oysters, on the half shell

Purée bread crumbs, butter, spinach, scallions, celery, garlic, onions, Pernod, vinegar, thyme, anise, salt, and pepper in a food processor. Place mix-

ture in a pastry bag fitted with a ½" fluted tip; chill. Heat broiler to high. Line a baking sheet with rock salt about ¼" deep. Nestle oysters onto bed of rock salt. Pipe filling over oysters; broil until tops are browned, about 4 minutes.

★ Tommy's Pompano en Papillote

SERVES 4

Pompano filets enrobed in a seafood sauce are baked in parchment-paper packets (pictured on [page 48](#)) at Tommy's Cuisine.

- 10 tbsp. unsalted butter
- ¼ cup flour
- 3 cups half & half
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 cup thinly sliced mushrooms
- 2 tbsp. dry sherry
- 8 shucked bluepoint oysters, juices reserved
- 10 oz. medium shrimp (about 20), peeled and deveined
- ¼ lb. jumbo lump crabmeat
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped parsley
- 2 scallions, finely chopped
- 4 6-oz. pompano filets
- 1 tbsp. paprika

1 Heat 4 tbsp. butter in a 2-qt. sauce-

pan over medium-high heat. Whisk in flour; cook 2 minutes. Add half & half and bring to a boil; reduce heat to medium and cook, until thick, 2–3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper; set béchamel aside.

2 Heat remaining butter in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Cook mushrooms until browned, 4–6 minutes. Add sherry, oyster juices, salt, and pepper; cook until reduced by half, 2–3 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in oysters, shrimp, crab, parsley, scallions, and béchamel.

3 Heat oven to 500°. Cut out four 16" x 10" heart-shaped pieces parchment paper; fold hearts in half and crease. Working with one filet at a time, place on one side of heart; season with salt and pepper. Put one quarter of seafood mixture over filet; sprinkle with paprika. Fold paper over filet and fold up edges to seal; transfer to a baking sheet. Bake until fish is cooked, 8–10 minutes.

Upperline's Oysters St. Claude

SERVES 4–6

Fried oysters are paired with a garlicky sauce (pictured on [page 45](#)) in this toothsome appetizer served

at Upperline, a restaurant in New Orleans' Uptown neighborhood.

- ½ cup parsley leaves
- 3 tbsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. sugar
- ¼ cup Crystal hot sauce
- 3 tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 20 cloves garlic, peeled
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 8 tbsp. unsalted butter
- Canola oil, for frying
- 1½ cups corn flour (see [page 85](#))
- ½ tsp. cayenne pepper
- 24 bluepoint oysters, shucked

Purée parsley, paprika, sugar, hot sauce, Worcestershire, garlic, juice, zest, salt, and pepper in a food processor until smooth. Heat butter in a 10" skillet over medium-high heat; add parsley mixture and cook until sauce thickens, 7 minutes. Heat 2" oil in a 6-qt. saucepan until a thermometer reads 350°. Mix flour, salt, and cayenne in a bowl. Working in batches, toss oysters in flour and shake off excess; fry until crisp, 1–2 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain; season with salt. Serve with sauce on side, for dipping.

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EVERLASTING FEAST

IN THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA, BOLD, UNIQUE FLAVORS, ANCIENT METHODS OF WINEMAKING, AND EPIC MEALS ARE AT THE CENTER OF A WAY OF LIFE

A picnic of boiled potatoes, fresh tomatoes, stewed chicken, bread, grapes, and cheese at a vineyard in the Kakheti region of the Republic of Georgia.



I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT THIS MEAL SO MANY TIMES NOW THAT THE MEMORY OF IT FEELS LIKE A DREAM: I'M SEATED AT A TABLE WHOSE SURFACE I CAN NO LONGER SEE—IT HAS DISAPPEARED ENTIRELY UNDERNEATH DOZENS OF OVERLAPPING

plates. There are only six of us, but the food laid out could easily feed 30. There are loaves of bread; plates of white, salty *sulguni* cheese; platters of peppery raw radishes, pickled tomatoes, and palate-freshening parsley, tarragon, and green onions; earthenware dishes called *ketsi* filled with grilled mushrooms and fried potatoes; jars of fresh yogurt and little bowls of rose petal jam and honey to add to it; bottles of tarragon soda; and pitchers of wine, some purple-black saperavi and others amber, apricot-scented rkatsiteli.

It's early autumn, and I'm in a town called Bodbiskhevi in Kakheti, the easternmost region of the Republic of Georgia. We're an hour into a dinner in the backyard of Gela Patalashvili, a winemaker here. His vineyards stretch for miles in every direction. If I squint, the tawny, arid landscape, thickly planted with grapevines and dotted with pomegranate and cypress trees, reminds me of Tuscany—that is, if Tuscany were bordered by the snowcapped Caucasus Mountains and home to a 7,000-year-old winemaking tradition (see "Cradle of Wine," [page 69](#)). Gathered around the table are my husband, Chris, and a handful of Georgian and American expat friends. After a day of helping Gela pick plums from his orchards, we've been invited to join him for dinner, which, as dinners tend to do in Georgia, has turned into a several-hour feast called a *supra* (meaning "tablecloth" for the way the food covers the table), a celebratory meal involving structured toasts, wine, song, and lots and lots of food.

Gela's wine propels the feast forward. As our host, he takes on the role of *tamada*, or toastmaster, walking us through a series of rousing salutations on which we're invited to riff, or if we prefer, simply raise our glasses and affirm, "Gaumarjos! Victory!" He reminds us that no sipping of wine is permitted between toasts—just when the toast is made. We nevertheless empty quite a few glasses before the night is through. The wine and the toasting suffuse the meal with a sense of purpose, with an ongoing poetic conversation, and an intensifying sense of communion.

Just when I am certain that there is no more room on the table, Ekaterina, Gela's wife, brings in *mtsvadi*, skewers of sizzling pork that have been grilled over a fire of last year's dried grapevines. As Ekaterina

approaches the table, Ketevan Mindorashvili, a folk musician and the wife of our friend John Wurdeman, bursts into song, and others join in, singing a dissonant three-part harmony that gives me goose bumps:

*Mtsvadsa mas mshveniersa da dadgromilsa
momtansa amisasa ats vadidebdet.*

*Let us now praise this beautiful and roasted
meat, as well as the one who brought it to us.*

Someone hands me a skewer, and I pull off the piping-hot meat with my fingers, dunk it into a sour plum sauce, *tkemali*, and devour it. It's perfect: juicy, smoky, with a salt and pepper crust, the fat buttery and full of flavor. Between the meat, the wine, the song, and the feeling of deepening friendship, I want to freeze this moment in time forever.

I FIRST VISITED THE REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA in 2002, when I was 21 years old. I was traveling with my mom, an ethnomusicologist who'd been coming to the country for years to study the local music. We landed in Tbilisi at a dimly lit airport, a faded modernist building constructed in the waning years of the Soviet Union. From the capital, we took a taxi two hours into the countryside to the town of Signaghi, where Mom had purchased a dilapidated dacha to use as a retreat for her choral group. We entered, expecting it to be empty, and found the house lit up, full of the good smells of cooking: Her musician friends had already let themselves in, taken over the kitchen, and laid out a feast in the backyard—my first *supra*, though I didn't know the word for it then.

On that weeklong visit I fell in love with Georgia. I swooned over its dramatic landscape. Though just the size of West Virginia, as it stretches from the Black Sea in the west almost to the Caspian Sea in the east, it traverses everything from Alpine (*continued on* [page 68](#))

Facing page: A meal of *amolesili lobio* (stewed red beans and walnuts; see [page 74](#) for a recipe) and *chadi* (corn bread).



At Pheasant's Tears Wine Bar in
Sighnaghi, a woman builds a fire in a
tone, a clay-walled oven, in preparation
for baking bread.





Acharuli khachapuri, Georgian cheese and egg bread (see [page 74](#) for a recipe). Facing page: *katmis satsivi*, chicken with walnut sauce (see [page 75](#) for a recipe).





SOMEONE HANDS ME A SKEWER, AND I PULL THE HOT MEAT OFF WITH MY FINGERS AND DEVOUR IT. BETWEEN THE FOOD, THE WINE, THE SONG, I WANT TO FREEZE THIS MOMENT IN TIME FOREVER

(continued from [page 62](#))

mountains to deserts to subtropical citrus groves. I was intrigued by the ancient language, which, with its loop-de-loop script and mellifluous tones, bears no relation to any other. And while its food was clearly influenced by its neighbors—Persian ways of using fruit to enrich meat stews; a penchant for mayonnaise-y salads that were a remnant of Soviet rule—Georgian cooking was still utterly its own: bold, with an emphasis on fresh ingredients and pure flavors. Instead of fat and flour,

walnuts, which grow here in abundance, were used to thicken sauces, and it seemed that fenugreek, coriander, and tarragon were in nearly everything. But I was moved most of all by the generosity of the people, strangers who would insist I stay for a meal if I so much as asked for a drink of water. It got under my skin, and I wanted to get to know this place.

I returned to Georgia a few times over the next several years, eventually spending ten months there in 2006 when Chris, a poet, became as obsessed with Georgia's verse as my mother was with its music, and received a grant to translate Georgian poetry. The two of us lived in an apartment in Tbilisi. While Chris crunched through translations, I wrote a food column for a local English-language paper that paid \$12.50 a story—not quite enough to live on but more than enough to cover the cost of dinner. It was a year of extraordinary eating: We lived on beans stewed with walnuts; platters of *khinkali*, dumplings stuffed with everything from pork to farmers' cheese and mint; flatbread filled with molten cheese and topped with an egg; and *pkhali*, cooked vegetables seasoned with a heady blend of ground walnuts, spices, and herbs. I loved every bite.

Easy as it was to eat our way through Georgia, it was hard to feel at home there. I spoke Georgian at the level of a two-year-old and was frustrated with my inability to communicate. I was clueless about how to accomplish everyday tasks; because I couldn't figure out how to pay the phone bill, the wire connecting our apartment to the grid was repossessed. And we were lonely. When we tired of feeling like strangers, we went back to Signaghi, where my mother's friends—now our friends, too—would welcome us with wine, food, and a place to relax. These visits had a way of restoring us. However alienated I sometimes felt, I always had a seat at their tables.

After the grant was up, we moved to New York, imagining we might return in a year or two. Instead, I ended up taking a full-time job. I gave birth to our daughter. I grew up a bit. As the years passed and our lives

changed, the months we had spent in Georgia felt more distant. But as time went on, its grip on my imagination grew stronger. I was worried that it might have all changed, that if I went back, I would no longer recognize it. I was hungry to return and renew old friendships. I wanted to reassure myself that it was real—that it was still there.

SIX YEARS LATER, I FINALLY MAKE it back to Georgia. Gela, whose *supra* years ago had come to symbolize what I love about this place, has partnered with our friend John Wurdeman to found Pheasant's Tears, a boutique winery and wine bar in Signaghi, and they've invited me to visit. From the moment the plane lands, I can see change. Georgia has been looking for ways to align itself culturally, politically, and economically with the West, and it shows. In Tbilisi there's a shiny new airport, and modern hotels dot the skyline. In more remote areas, change is happening, too, though it's not as obvious. On the drive over to Signaghi, factories and massive fields give way to vineyards, farm plots, and orchards, and tin-roofed two-story brick houses with figs, pomegranates, and grapes—always grapes—growing in the yard. The car rounds a bend, and the town comes into view, the familiar silhouette of its 18th-century steeples and red-tiled roofs on a hillside jutting out over a vast valley. As we drive through the town, I notice the main road's been repaved, and that the historic buildings all look freshly painted.

We pull up in front of a doorway marked Khokhbis Tsremlebi—"Pheasant's Tears"—and I exit the cab and walk through the doorway, which leads to a cobblestone courtyard. I first see a baker making bread in a *tone*, a tall tandoori-like oven that has existed in this part of the world since time immemorial. Coals smolder at the very bottom, and the clay walls radiate heat. The baker slaps dough against its inner walls. After a few minutes, she hands me a loaf. It's damn good—fragrant and crisp on the outside, white and fluffy within.

I walk past her to the wine bar's tiny kitchen, which issues forth the most amazing smells. I find Gia Rokashvili, who owned a convenience store when I was last here. "Gamarjoba! Hello!" Gia exclaims. As we catch up, he explains that Signaghi was the recipient of a grant for historical restoration and tourism development—which accounts for the smooth road and fresh paint. New shops have opened up, and his store has gone out of business. Hence, he says, his job as a cook.

Gia sings "Let It Be" under his breath as he prepares *khashlama*, a regional meat stew he's making with veal and sour plums. He cuts veal shoulder into chunks and places them in a pot with water, not quite enough to cover them. Then he chops a heap of green onions, tarragon, cilantro, and mint, along with a few salt-fermented plums—an intensely sour and biting ingredient that Georgians use to bring piquancy and depth to all kinds of slow-cooked dishes. I want to eat standing in the kitchen, but Gia shoos me out. Instead, John joins me at a table in the barroom for a few glasses of wine and some of Gia's food.

It's this moment that really drives home how (continued on [page 73](#))

Facing page: A monk at Alaverdi Monastery samples wine from a *quevri*, a subterranean clay vessel for fermenting and storing wine.

A full-page photograph of a Georgian Orthodox monk with a long, dark beard and a black kufi with a red cross. He is wearing a black robe and is pouring a golden-colored wine from a long, narrow glass tube into a small, rounded wine glass. The background is a warm, textured wall, possibly made of stone or brick, with a tiled floor in the foreground.

CRADLE OF WINE

Georgia is home to a unique winemaking tradition that stretches back thousands of years: Grapes here are crushed, then fermented skin-on for several months in buried earthenware vessels called *qvevri*. Prolonged contact with the skins produces wines that are rich in tannins, which lend depth and dryness, plus great stability and structure. After fermentation, the wine is typically transferred to another *qvevri* to age, where it acquires even greater dimension. There are more than 500 grape varieties in Georgia, but in Kakheti the most common white variety is rkatsiteli, which yields vivid amber wines that go perfectly with Georgian food. The flame-colored Alaverdi Monastery Rkatsiteli 2010 (\$25), made by monks who have been producing *qvevri* wines since the year

1011, offers heady notes of walnut, strawberry, and honeysuckle that can stand up to savory dishes such as chicken with walnut sauce. **Pheasant's Tears Rkatsiteli 2009 (\$18)**, an earthy wine with mouth-gripping tannins and deep aromas of dried apricot and pu-ehr tea, complements bitter greens and sautéed eggplant. **Dergi Rkatsiteli 2009 (\$20)**, a dry, austere wine with a bright, floral lift and a lemon-zest finish, is a match for the salty, buttery Georgian cheese bread *khachapuri*. The region's most common red grape, saperavi, is used to make **Nika Saperavi 2009 (\$20)**, a deep purple, earthy Bordeaux-like wine that's a good match for veal and sour plum stew. All of these wines open up particularly well with decanting. —K.S.



Vano Iantbelidze, embracing a friend, partakes in a *supra*, a celebratory feast, in the eastern region of Kakheti in the Republic of Georgia.





TRAVEL GUIDE **GEORGIA**

Dinner for two with drinks and tip

Inexpensive: Under \$15; Moderate: \$16–\$30; Expensive: Over \$30

International flights land in Tbilisi, a 1,500-year-old city on the Kura River that's worth exploring. The two-hour taxi ride from Tbilisi to Signaghi costs about \$40.

(continued from page 68) far things have come in the six years I've been gone. Gia sends out dishes, and each is recognizably Georgian but with a twist. For one, the food is plated tapas style. Fresh yogurt is drizzled with smoked sunflower oil; a vegetable salad, made not from blanched vegetables as is common but from smoky eggplant and red peppers that have been grilled over the *tone*. And the *hashlama*, usually a hearty, stick-to-your ribs dish, here is delicate and fall-apart tender. I'm skeptical for about half a second, until I start eating. It's all delicious. And the veal, infused with tarragon and accompanied by the salty-sour plums, is as astonishing as ever, with those big contrasting flavors that are the hallmarks of Georgian cooking. The setting and presentation may be different, but the soul of the food is the same: forceful, honest, awesome.

The next day I visit John's home where his mother-in-law, Leah Beroshvili, is making lunch. Having eaten Leah's wonderful cooking on every visit to Georgia, I am looking forward to this meal. Leah, 73, her dark brown hair pulled back into a bun, wears an ankle-length black skirt, sturdy black shoes, and an apron with a chile pepper print. She smiles and waves me to a seat next to John and Ketevan. Today she is making *katmis satsivi*, chicken in walnut sauce. "Es chemi saquareli sachmelia," Leah says. "It's my favorite dish," one that's been in the family for generations. Her mother-in-law made it especially well and with a sense of joy that inspires Leah's cooking to this day. "You always felt warm when you ate her food," she says. It's exactly how I feel about Leah's cooking.

Leah throws several handfuls of walnuts into the bowl of a food processor, followed by spoonfuls of blue fenugreek, a subtle Caucasian variety, and coriander seeds, cloves, cinnamon, plus an orange-gold spice that I can't immediately identify. Leah gestures to the ceiling strung with garlands of drying marigolds. "Es zaprana aris," she says. "Marigold flour." I taste a pinch; it reminds me of thyme.

Then she breaks down a boiled chicken, cracking the breastbone and peeling the meat from the rib cage. In a skillet, she heats sunflower oil and adds the meat, turning it with her knife until it's browned all over. While the chicken cooks, she pulses the spices and walnuts until they're velvety and fine, then spoons in chicken fat from the frying pan and a few ladles of broth that she's reserved. She warms the sauce until it's thick enough to coat the tip of her finger. While the *satsivi* finishes, Leah sautés some eggplant until it's blistered, slathers it with a sauce she's made from walnuts, fresh herbs, and spices, then scatters red onion on top—she would have preferred pomegranate seeds, she tells me, but couldn't find any at the market this morning.

Finally, Leah makes *khachapuri*, a cheese-filled flatbread that's grid-dled until crispy on the outside and gooey within. When it's ready to serve, Leah slides it from the pan and quarters it. The crust is browned in spots, and as the knife cuts through, cheese oozes out. She shuttles it to the table and we eat it hot, balancing the scalding buttery wedges on

Facing page, *badridzhani nigvsi*, fried eggplant with walnut sauce (see page 74 for a recipe).

WHERE TO STAY

Radisson Blu Iveria Hotel

Rose Revolution Square 1, 0108, Tbilisi (995/32/402-200; radissonblu.com/hotel-tbilisi). Rates: \$250 for a double. This 18-story luxury hotel is perched above the Mtkvari River in the center of Tbilisi, within striking distance of the restaurants and shops on Rustaveli Avenue, the city's main drag. Rooms are serene and spacious, with free Wi-Fi and, on the upper floors, spectacular views.

Nana's Family Hotel

2 Sarajishvili Street, Signaghi (995/559-79-50-93; kkshvl@yahoo.com). Rates: \$17 a person. This homey guesthouse is in Signaghi's picturesque town center. Proprietor Nana Kokiasvili speaks some English and cooks excellent Georgian meals. Her house, which doubles as the hotel, is spacious with clean, modern facilities and hot water. She can also arrange excursions to local sites.

WHERE TO EAT

Shemoikhede Genatsvale

Leselidze Street 25, Tbilisi (995/32/243-9646). Moderate. This welcoming restaurant (whose name means "Come in, darling") in the heart of Tbilisi's Old Town serves four types of delectable *khinkali*, Georgian dumplings, as well as a wide range of traditional offerings, including *badridzhani nigvsi* (eggplant with walnuts) and *shekmeruli*, chicken in a butter and garlic sauce served, still siz-

zling, in an earthenware dish.

Salobie

Mtskheta Road, Mtskheta (995/99/548-229). Inexpensive. About 20 minutes outside of Tbilisi is "where the beans are"—the literal meaning of the restaurant's name. The thing to eat here is the *lobio*, a flavorful bean stew served in red clay pots along with *chadi*, Georgian corn bread. Also very good are the *mtsvadi*, skewers of grilled meat; pork, beef, and fresh herb *khinkali* dumplings; and the *acharuli khachapuri*, a canoe-shaped



bread cradling a puddle of hot butter, molten cheese, and an egg.

Pheasant's Tears Wine Bar

Baratashvili Street 18, Signaghi (995/599/534-484; pheasantstears.blogspot.com). Moderate. This recently opened wine bar in Signaghi features traditional *qvevri* wines, including shavkapito, a beautifully balanced red, paired with updated Georgian classics served tapas style: mushrooms with tarragon and mint; *hashlama*, stewed veal with sour plums or quince; bread crisps with tahini and sunflower oil. You can also tour the winery and vineyards by car or on horseback. —K.S.

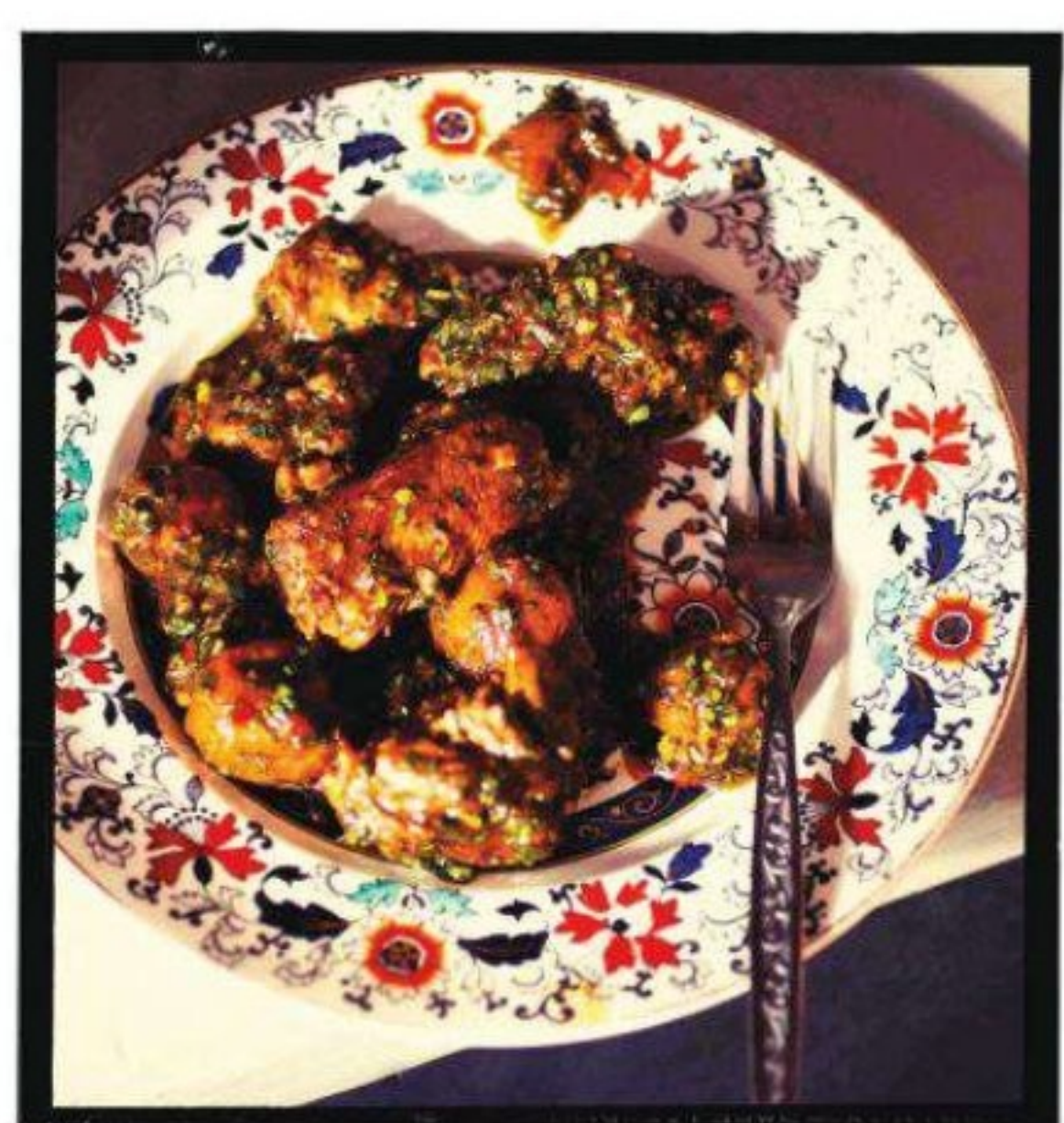
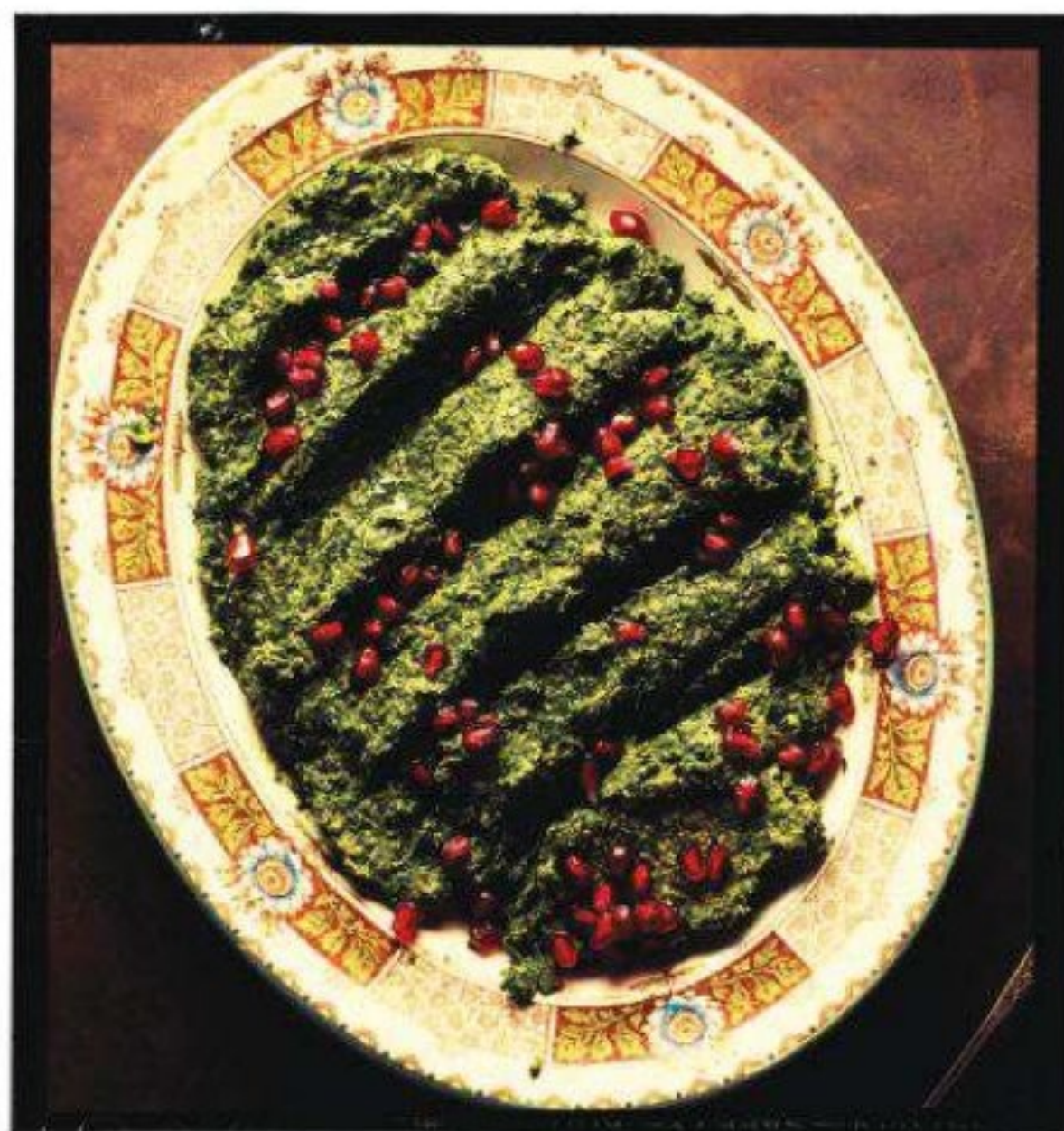
our fingertips and trying to catch every melting drip. Ketevan brings out a carafe of *chacha*, a grappa-like spirit that she infused with violets picked from nearby meadows. It's crystal clear, with a sweet fragrance: spring in a bottle. "For the grace of the morning," John says. We clink glasses.

We sit and eat, murmuring over the creamy walnut sauce of the *katmis satsivi*, helping ourselves to the silken slices of eggplant, nibbling grapes from the front yard and local pears that taste of honey.

"May bitterness be away from us and sweetness be in our lives," John says, raising his glass. We drink.

I look around the table, savoring the food, the company, the feeling of being here. I know that the moment can't be trapped in amber, but I no longer want it to be. I know that whatever changes come for Georgia, for my friends, and in my own life, these simple but important things—the pleasure that comes from cooking and eating with people whom I cherish so much; the sincerity and spontaneity of the *supra*—will endure.

John offers one more toast for the road: "To what you do with love." I raise my glass and say wholeheartedly, "Gaumarjos!"



Clockwise from top left: spinach and walnut salad; cheese and mint stuffed dumplings; veal and sour plum stew; and beets in tart cherry sauce (see [page 75](#) for recipes).

Acharuli Khachapuri

(Cheese and Egg Bread)

SERVES 4-6

Filled with melted cheese and topped with a runny egg, this flatbread (pictured on [page 66](#)) is best eaten hot—tear off the crust and dunk it in the well of cheese and egg.

- 1 tsp. active dry yeast
- 1/4 tsp. sugar
- 1 tbsp. olive oil, plus more for greasing
- 1 1/4 cups flour, plus more for dusting
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 2 1/4 cups shredded Muenster cheese (14 oz.)
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese (6 oz.)
- 2 eggs
- 4 tbsp. unsalted butter, cubed

1 Combine yeast, sugar, and 2/3 cup water heated to 115° in a bowl; let

stand until foamy, about 10 minutes. Add oil, flour, and salt; mix with a wooden spoon until a soft dough forms. Transfer to a lightly floured surface and knead until smooth and elastic, about 4 minutes. Transfer to a lightly greased bowl and cover loosely with plastic wrap; set in a warm place until doubled in size, about 45 minutes.

2 Place a pizza stone on a rack in lower third of oven. Heat oven to 500° for 1 hour. Combine cheeses in a bowl; set aside. Punch down dough and divide in half. On a piece of lightly floured parchment paper, roll half of dough into a 10" circle about 1/8" thick. Spread a quarter of the cheese mixture over dough, leaving a 1/2" border. On one side of the circle, tightly roll dough about a third of the way toward the center. Repeat on the opposite end. There should be a 2"-3" space between the

two rolls. Pinch the open ends of the rolls together and twist to seal, making a boat shape; place another quarter of the cheese mixture in the middle; repeat with remaining dough and cheese. Transfer boats on paper to stone; bake until golden brown, 14-16 minutes. Crack 1 egg into the center of each boat. Return to oven until egg white is slightly set, 3-4 minutes. Place 2 tbsp. butter on each bread; serve hot.

Amolesili Lobio

(Stewed Red Beans and Walnuts)

SERVES 6-8

A creamy purée of toasted walnuts adds richness and depth to this hearty kidney bean stew (pictured on [page 63](#)).

- 1 cup toasted walnuts
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 medium carrot, finely

chopped

- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 small red Holland chile, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- 1/2 small leek, finely chopped
- 2 tsp. coriander seeds
- 1 tsp. hot paprika
- 1 lb. dried dark red kidney beans, soaked overnight and drained
- 12 cups chicken stock
- 1/2 cup finely chopped cilantro
- 1/4 cup finely chopped dill
- 1/4 cup finely chopped parsley
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- Country bread, for serving

Place walnuts and half the oil in a food processor; purée until very smooth, about 2 minutes, and set aside. Heat remaining oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add garlic, carrots, onions, chiles, and leeks; cook, stirring until golden, about 10 minutes. Add coriander and paprika; cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add beans and stock; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium, cook, slightly covered, until beans are very tender, 2-2 1/2 hours. Using a ladle, transfer half the beans to a blender; purée until smooth and return to pot. Stir in walnut purée, cilantro, dill, parsley, vinegar, salt, and pepper; serve with bread on the side.

Badridzhani Nigvsi

(Fried Eggplant with Walnut Sauce)

SERVES 6-8

Tender Japanese eggplant work best in this appetizer of fried eggplant sandwiching pesto-like walnut sauce (pictured on [page 72](#)). Pomegranate seeds are often used for garnish.

- 1 cup toasted walnuts
- 1/3 cup packed cilantro leaves
- 1/4 cup packed basil leaves
- 1/4 cup packed parsley leaves
- 1 tsp. ground fenugreek (see [page 85](#))
- 1/2 tsp. hot paprika
- 1/4 tsp. ground turmeric
- 1 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/2 small yellow onion, roughly chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 1 1/2 cups canola oil
- 4 small Japanese eggplant, trimmed and sliced lengthwise 1/2" thick
- 1/2 small red onion, thinly sliced crosswise into rings

1 Place walnuts, half each of the cilantro, basil, and parsley, plus fenugreek, paprika, turmeric, vinegar, garlic, yellow onions, salt, pepper, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup water in a food processor; purée until very smooth, about 2 minutes. Set sauce aside.

2 Heat oil in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches, fry eggplant, flipping once, until golden and cooked through, about 4 minutes. Transfer to paper towels to drain and cool; season with salt and pepper.

3 Spread each slice of eggplant with about 2 tbsp. walnut sauce and fold in half; transfer to a serving platter and garnish with remaining cilantro, basil, and parsley leaves, and the sliced red onions.

Charkhlis Chogi

(Beets in Tart Cherry Sauce)

SERVES 6–8

Tart cherries bring sweet-sour flavor to this simple salad of herbs and roasted beets (pictured on page 74).

- 1 lb. medium beets, scrubbed
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, finely chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dried tart cherries (see page 85)
- 1 tbsp. fresh lemon juice
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped cilantro
- 1 tbsp. finely chopped parsley

1 Heat oven to 400°. Place beets, 3 tbsp. olive oil, salt, and pepper in an 8"-square baking dish and cover with foil; cook until tender, 1–1½ hours. When cool enough to handle, peel beets and cut into 1" pieces; set aside.

2 Heat remaining oil plus butter in a 12" skillet over medium-high heat. Add garlic and onions; cook, stirring occasionally, until soft, about 3 minutes. Add cherries, salt, pepper, and 1 cup water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook, stirring occasionally, until sauce is reduced by half, about 10 minutes. Stir in juice, pour sauce over beets, and mix to combine; let sit until room temperature and garnish with cilantro and parsley.

Katmis Satsivi

(Chicken with Walnut Sauce)

SERVES 6–8

A thick, aromatic walnut sauce adds luscious body and earthy

flavor to this spiced chicken dish (pictured on page 67).

- 3 cups toasted walnuts, plus $\frac{1}{2}$ cup roughly chopped
- 5 cups chicken stock
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups roughly chopped cilantro
- 10 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 red Holland chile, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
- 2 lb. boneless, skinless chicken thighs, cut into $1\frac{1}{2}$ " pieces
- 3 tsp. sweet paprika
- 1 tsp. hot paprika
- 1 tsp. ground coriander
- 1 tsp. ground fenugreek
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 2 egg yolks
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar

1 Place 3 cups walnuts and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup stock in a food processor; purée until very smooth. Add half each of the cilantro, garlic, and onions, plus chiles, salt, and pepper; purée until very smooth and set sauce aside.

2 Heat oil in a 6-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Season chicken with salt and pepper and add to pan; cook, turning as needed, until browned, about 8 minutes. Add remaining garlic and onions; cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, about 4 minutes. Add paprikas, coriander, fenugreek, and cinnamon; cook until fragrant, 1 minute. Add reserved walnut sauce and remaining stock; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook, stirring occasionally, until chicken is tender and sauce is reduced by a third, 30–35 minutes.

3 Place yolks in a bowl; whisk in 1 ladle of sauce from stew; return sauce to the stew and cook 5 minutes more. Stir in vinegar, salt, and pepper; ladle into serving bowls and garnish with chopped walnuts and remaining cilantro.

Khashlama

(Veal and Sour Plum Stew)

SERVES 6–8

Though versions of this robust meat stew (pictured on page 74) are eaten throughout Georgia, the salt-cured plums, hot chiles, and fragrant fresh herbs are typical of the bold, contrasting flavors of the Kakheti region.

- 2 lb. boneless veal shoulder,

trimmed and cut into 2" pieces

- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 large yellow onion, thinly sliced
- 1 small red Holland chile, stemmed, seeded, and finely chopped
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup tomato paste
- 1 tsp. ground allspice
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. hot paprika
- 12 Chinese jarred pickled plums, rinsed and drained (see page 85)
- 3 cups chicken stock
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup finely chopped cilantro
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped mint
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped scallions
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped tarragon
- Country bread, for serving

Season veal with salt and pepper; set aside. Heat oil in an 8-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Add veal; cook, turning as needed, until browned, about 10 minutes. Add garlic, onions, and chiles; cook, stirring occasionally, until golden, 8–10 minutes. Add tomato paste, allspice, and paprika; cook, stirring, until slightly caramelized, about 2 minutes. Add plums and stock; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to medium; cook, covered, stirring occasionally, until veal is tender, 1–1½ hours. Stir in cilantro, mint, scallions, tarragon, salt, and pepper; serve with bread on the side.

Khinkali Qvelit

(Cheese and Mint Stuffed Dumplings)

MAKES 25

These Georgian dumplings are traditionally made with a spiced meat filling; this cheese and herb version (pictured on page 74), once meant for religious fasting days, is now enjoyed year-round.

- 4 cups flour
- $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 3 cups crumbled farmers' cheese (1½ lb.)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped mint
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely chopped cilantro
- 3 eggs, beaten
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Stir together flour, $1\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. salt, and $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups warm water in a bowl until dough forms; transfer to a work surface and knead until smooth, about 6 minutes. Wrap

dough in plastic wrap; refrigerate for 40 minutes. Meanwhile, mix together farmers' cheese, sour cream, mint, cilantro, eggs, salt, and pepper in a bowl; set filling aside.

2 Divide dough into 25 equal pieces and shape each piece into a ball. Using a rolling pin, roll a ball into a 6" round. Place about 2 tbsp. filling in center of round and fold edges of dough over filling, creating pleats in dough as you go, until filling is covered. Holding dumpling in the palm of one hand, grasp top of dumpling where pleats meet, and twist to seal pleats and form a top knot. Repeat with remaining dough balls and filling. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Working in batches, boil dumplings until they float and dough is tender, about 8 minutes. Drain and serve hot, with black pepper.

Pkhali

(Spinach and Walnut Salad)

SERVES 4–6

Almost any vegetable can be substituted for spinach in this vegetarian appetizer (pictured on page 74). In Georgia, roasted beet and green bean versions are common.

- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ lb. baby spinach
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups toasted walnuts
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup roughly chopped cilantro
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup roughly chopped parsley
- 1 tsp. hot paprika
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground turmeric
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp. ground fenugreek (see page 85)
- 3 tbsp. olive oil
- 2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
- 1 small yellow onion, roughly chopped
- Pomegranate seeds, for garnish


Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add spinach; cook until wilted, about 1 minute. Using a slotted spoon, transfer spinach to a bowl of ice water; drain and squeeze out as much water as possible. Transfer to a food processor; purée until almost smooth, 1–2 minutes, and transfer to a bowl. Add walnuts, cilantro, parsley, paprika, turmeric, fenugreek, oil, vinegar, garlic, onions, salt, and pepper to the food processor; purée until very smooth. Mix walnut purée and spinach together; transfer to a serving platter and garnish with pomegranate seeds.



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Ramp and Goat Cheese Toast



Farmers Market, NYC



Harvested Ramps at Mountain Sweet Berry Farms



ABC Kitchen, NYC

Clockwise from top left: Vera Vandenbosch(2); Patrick Cline; Kellie Quanton

FARM TO TABLE WITH CHEF DAN KLUGER

ABC Kitchen's Ramp Toast with Ramps Locally Sourced from **Mountain Sweet Berry Farm** in Roscoe, New York

Located in the southern Catskills, **Mountain Sweet Berry Farm** is beneficial for foraging a variety of edibles, most notably ramps. Traditionally, ramp season signifies the start of spring; ramps are the first green in the forest, even before the leaves on trees. Mountain Sweet Berry Farm can be found at Manhattan's Union Square Greenmarket every Wednesday and Saturday.

RAMP AND GOAT CHEESE TOAST

FOR THE RAMP BUTTER

- 1 lb. ramp greens, washed and dried
- 1/4 lb. butter
- 2 tsp. salt
- 1/4 lb. soft butter

METHOD FOR THE RAMP BUTTER

In a sauté pan, heat the butter until it becomes foamy. Sauté ramps until wilted and season with salt. Immediately cool in a mixing bowl set over ice.

In a blender, puree sautéed ramps with the second set of butter until mixed together, then cool down in a bowl and set on ice. Allow to cool and reserve.

FOR THE PICKLED RAMP

1 PINT VOLUME

- 1 pint white wine vinegar
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1/2 tsp. red mustard seeds, whole
- 1/2 tsp. fennel seeds, whole
- 1/2 tsp. coriander seeds, whole
- 1/4 pieces dried chili, whole
- 3/4 pint white ramp bottoms, whole

METHOD FOR PICKLED RAMP

Place the ramp bottoms (the white parts) in a quart container. Place the aromatics in a sachet of cheesecloth. Bring white wine vinegar and sugar to a boil, add sachet and simmer for five minutes. Pour over the ramps. Cover with a piece of parchment, weighing down if necessary so that everything is submerged. Allow to cool to room temperature. Reserve.

FOR THE RAMP TOAST

- 4 slices bread, such as rustic sourdough*
- 1/2 cup Lynnhaven goat cheese
- 1/2 cup pickled ramps, sliced thin
- Black pepper, freshly milled, and Coarse Maine sea salt

*Sullivan Street Bakery's Truccione Sare works best

METHOD FOR THE RAMP ROAST

Drizzle bread with olive oil and cook on the griddle until golden and crispy. Evenly spread ramp butter onto the toast. Slice toast into four pieces. Evenly garnish with dollops of goat cheese, pickled ramps, and chive blossom flowers. Finish with black pepper and sea salt.



KLUGER'S INSPIRATION

"Jean-Georges likes to include seasonal toasts on the menu at ABC Kitchen and one of my favorite ingredients to use in the spring is ramps. Walking through the Union Square Green Market with a few crates of ramps from Mountain Sweet Berry Farm, I was trying to think of how to use them. I had an idea to do some kind of toast. I picked up some goat cheese, came back to the restaurant, and started playing around with the ingredients. We've added the ramp toast to our spring menu at ABC Kitchen and it's one of our most popular items."

ABC KITCHEN

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IN THE SAVEUR KITCHEN

Discoveries and Techniques from Our Favorite Room in the House » Edited by Todd Coleman

Black Magic

When it comes to cocktails, New Orleans is America's most spirited city

THE COCKTAIL MAY not have been invented in New Orleans, but it was perfected here—the city, in keeping with its abundant joie de vivre, has given rise to some of the nation's most spectacular and beloved libations. The same inventiveness and flair for theatricality that drive the city's big-flavored Creole cuisine (see “New Orleans,” page 36) shine through in its drinks: intense, layered, gorgeous concoctions that often resemble sorcery more than bartending. Drinks and dining go hand in hand in New Orleans, whether it's a preprandial Sazerac (a bracing blend of rye, bitters, and a kiss of absinthe, invented here in the 1850s) or the Café Brûlot Diabolique (born at Antoine's Restaurant in the 1890s and pictured, right), an after-dinner drink made, tableside, by cascading flaming brandy down a long twist of clove-studded orange rind into a pool of spiced coffee. As Ti Adelaide Martin, co-owner of Commander's Palace, puts it, “A great meal begins and ends with a great cocktail.” We'll drink to that. (See page 80 for five of our favorite New Orleans cocktails.) —Todd Coleman

Charles Abbyad preparing a Café Brûlot Diabolique at Arnaud's (see page 80 for a recipe).

TODD COLEMAN

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Arnaud's Café Brûlot Diabolique

SERVES 4-6

To make our simplified version of this flaming coffee cocktail, simmer $\frac{1}{3}$ cup orange curaçao, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup brandy, 10 whole cloves, 3 cinnamon sticks, 1 quartered orange, and the peel of a lemon in a heatproof 4-qt. saucepan over medium-high heat. Using a match or lighter, carefully ignite and cook, swirling pan until flames die out. Stir in 3 cups strong black coffee and 3-5 tbsp. sugar; cook, stirring, until sugar is dissolved. Strain coffee into brûlot or demitasse cups.



Commander's Palace Sazerac

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

To make the official cocktail of New Orleans, pour $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. absinthe (preferably Lucid; see [page 85](#)) into an old-fashioned glass; swirl to coat, and discard liqueur; fill glass with ice. Shake 2 oz. rye (see [page 85](#)), $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. simple syrup, 3 dashes Peychaud's bitters, and 1 dash Angostura bitters in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Discard ice in glass; strain cocktail into glass. Rub the rim with a lemon twist and drop twist into cocktail.



Arnaud's French 75

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

This elegant libation is served at the historic bar attached to Arnaud's restaurant, which dates to the late 1800s. To make it, combine $1\frac{1}{4}$ oz. cognac (preferably Courvoisier VS; see [page 85](#)), $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. fresh lemon juice, and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. simple syrup in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake and pour into a champagne flute. Top with chilled champagne (preferably Moët & Chandon Imperial; see [page 85](#)) and garnish with a small piece of lemon peel.



Hotel Monteleone's Vieux Carré

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

The recipe for this potent drink, named for the French Quarter, or Vieux Carré ("old square" in French), comes from the Hotel Monteleone's rotating Carousel Bar. To make it, stir $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. Benedictine liqueur (see [page 85](#)), $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. rye whiskey, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. cognac, $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. sweet vermouth, 1 dash each Peychaud's and Angostura bitters, and ice in a chilled old-fashioned glass. Garnish with a lemon twist.



Brennan's Brandy Milk Punch

MAKES 1 COCKTAIL

Along with the bloody mary, this creamy cocktail is a New Orleans brunch mainstay. It features an aromatic cognac named for the French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte that's aged at least five years. To make it, combine 2 oz. Napoleon brandy (see [page 85](#)), 4 oz. half & half, 1 oz. simple syrup, and $\frac{1}{4}$ oz. vanilla extract in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously and pour into a chilled old-fashioned glass. Garnish with freshly grated nutmeg.

BITTER SWEET

In 1838, Antoine Peychaud Jr. opened an apothecary in the French Quarter. There he served a remedy for stomach ailments made by mixing brandy with a proprietary tincture of bitter gentian root soaked with botanicals and other spices in high-proof alcohol. The combination was soon in demand across the city, and eventually became the basis for one of New Orleans' first cocktails, the Sazerac. Since then Peychaud's bitters have become essential to Big Easy-born tipples. It's still a key component in the Sazerac, as well as newer creations such as the Vieux Carré (see a recipe, left). Sweet and floral with hints of nutmeg and cinnamon, just a few dashes lend mixed drinks a warm herbal fragrance and flavor. —*Felicia Campbell*



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Spice of Life

In New Orleans, Louisiana-style hot sauces reign supreme

Nothing unites New Orleans diners like their love of hot sauce—and there's nothing more polarizing than asking them to name the best one. With that in mind, we found that when we were seeking the perfect hot sauce for the recipes in our feature story on the city, it was hard to improve on the classics. Our favorites are three old-school sauces made in southern Louisiana, a center of chile cultivation, that have been used in New Orleans for the better part of a century. Each is bright and pure in flavor, and made from just chiles, vinegar, and salt. Though they share the same core ingredients, we favored them for different applications. The cayenne-based **Original Louisiana Hot Sauce**, an 80-year-old brand, is the subtlest and sweetest of the lot, great when you want to bring heat to a dish such as crawfish étouffée without eclipsing other flavors. **Crystal Hot Sauce**, which for decades was made right in the city, has a punch of vinegar that gives spicy New Orleans standards like barbecued shrimp their characteristic tanginess. And **Tabasco**—at 145 years of age the granddaddy of Louisiana hot sauces—brings a mouthwatering peppery finish to everything from hollandaise-draped eggs Hussarde to broiled oysters. —Kellie Evans

TODD COLEMAN (7)

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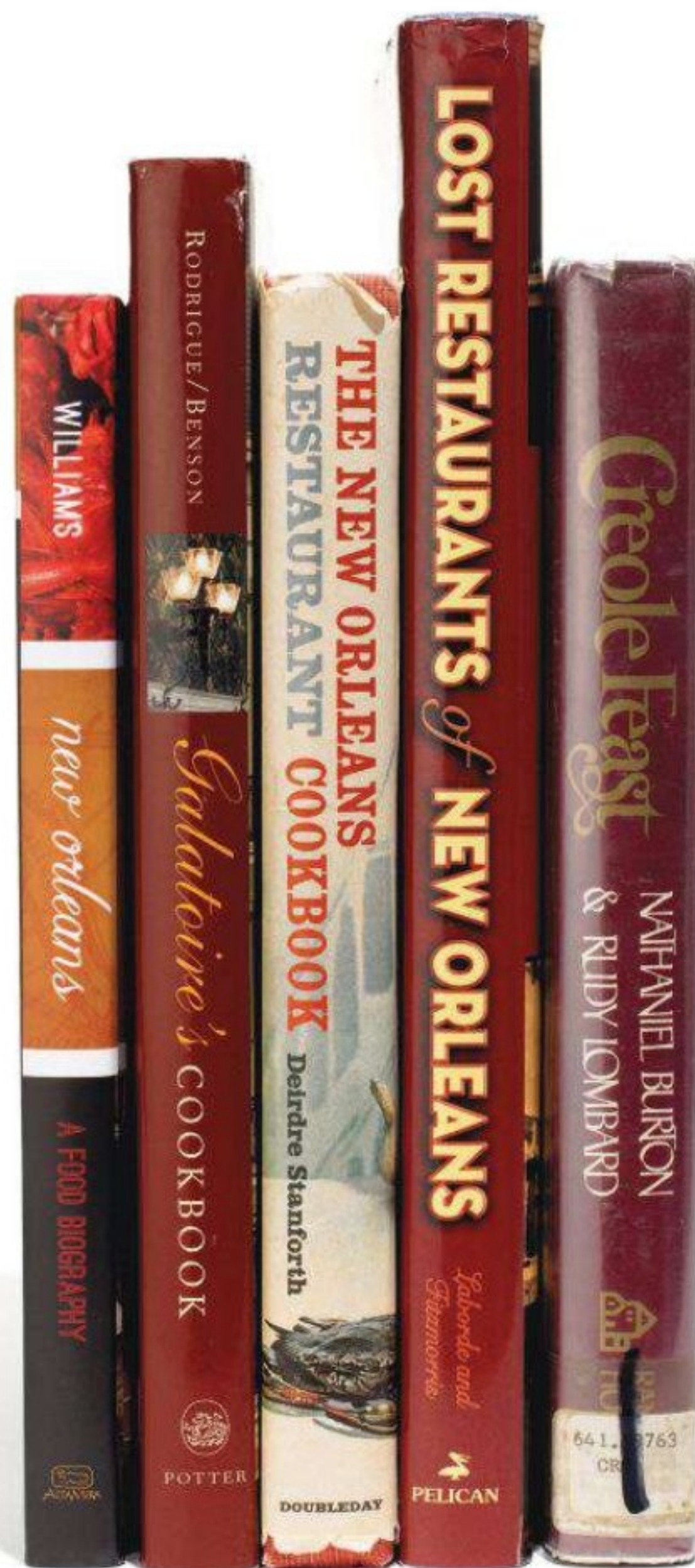
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Our Crescent City Bookshelf

NEW ORLEANS sets fire to a cook's imagination like no other city, a fact amply illustrated by the multitude of books written over the years devoted to its singular cuisine. As we cooked our way through our celebration of New Orleans' classic dishes, a few books stood out from the rest. There's one volume that distills the essence of the Big Easy's restaurants better than any other: **The New Orleans Restaurant Cookbook** (Doubleday & Company, 1967). In it, author Deirdre Stanforth examines the evolution of eight of the city's most magnificent dining institutions. The book includes more than 200 recipes—such as Arnaud's *supreme de volaille en papillote*, chicken breast in a creamy mushroom sauce baked in parchment paper, and a brandy bread pudding from Commander's Palace—that exemplify the Creole culinary canon. We're equally indebted to **Creole Feast** (Random House, 1978), whose authors Nathaniel Burton and Rudy Lombard studiously observed and interviewed the African-American cooks who ran the kitchens of New Orleans' best restaurants in the '70s. The result is an edifying and intimate account, offering authoritative cooking tips—how to slip tomatoes out of their skins; how to keep a cream soup from curdling—in a friendly tone, along with 319 recipes such as roasted chicken with tomato gravy, and lamb shoulder with caper sauce. Over the years many restaurants have closed, but their memories—and their menus—live on. In **Lost Restaurants of New Orleans** (Pelican Publishing, 2011), Peggy Scott Laborde and Tom Fitzmorris offer a paean to the city's bygone eateries, including photos and images of ephemera, as well as recipes that range from famous dishes such as whole flounder stuffed with crabmeat from the legendary Bruning's, which opened in 1859 and shuttered after Hurricane Katrina, to lesser known but equally beloved specialties such as spaghetti alla Turci in a chicken, veal, and pork ragù from Turci's, a much mourned red sauce joint. For nailing the sheer charisma, ebullience, and inventiveness of the Crescent City's dining culture, we loved Melvin Rodrigue and Jyl Benson's **Galatoire's Cookbook** (Clarkson Potter, 2005), which captures the charm of the 108-year-old

French Quarter restaurant with anecdotes, photographs, and more than 140 recipes for luxurious signature dishes such as crabmeat Sardou and Creole seafood gumbo, a peppery okra-thickened stew that's chockfull of oysters, crabmeat, and shrimp. And for putting it all into context, we couldn't have done without Elizabeth M. Williams's authoritative **New Orleans: A Food Biography** (AltaMira, 2011), which explains why New Orleans fare is what it is. Williams takes a comprehensive approach, detailing the many forces and establishments—from the Mississippi River, with its bounty of shrimp and freshwater fish, to the local grocery chain Schwegmann's—that have shaped the way the city eats and cooks. —Karen Shimizu



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THE PANTRY

A Guide to Resources

In producing the stories for this issue, we discovered ingredients and information too good to keep to ourselves. Please feel free to raid our pantry!

BY KELLIE EVANS

First

To find **American Cooking: Creole and Acadian**, part of the 1971 Time-Life "Foods of the World" series, search for vintage copies at strandbooks.com or amazon.com.

Fare

Hunt for vintage **egg cups** on etsy.com or [eBay](http://ebay.com). Perk up with one of our favorite brands of canned ground coffee; try **Cafe Altura Fair Trade Dark Blend**, available at Amazon (\$28 for three 12-ounce cans; amazon.com); **Café Bustelo Espresso** and **Café du Monde**, available at Whole Foods Markets across the country (wholefoods.com); **Chock Full o' Nuts**, available at Walmart (\$4 for an 11.3-ounce can; walmart.com); **illy**, available from shop.illy.com (\$30 for two 8.8-ounce cans; 877/469-4559); **Jittery Joe's Sumatra Wahana Natural**, available from Jittery Joe's Coffee (\$15 for a 12-ounce can; store.jitteryjoes.com); **Morning Star Fair Trade Organic Breakfast Blend**, available from Morning Star (\$9 for a 10-ounce can; 800/409-7350; morningstarcoffee.com); and **Tim Horton's Fine Grind**, available from Tim Horton's (\$17 for a 32.8-ounce can; 888/601-1616; shopus.timhortons.com). To cook the recipes from our favorite Middle Eastern cookbooks, purchase **Malouf** (Hardie Grant Books, 2012) at Amazon (\$33; see above); **Mint Tea and Minarets** (La Caravane Publishing, 2012) at Amazon (\$30; see above); **The Lebanese Kitchen** (Phaidon, 2012) from Strand (\$45; 212/473-1452; strandbooks.com), and **Modern Flavors of Arabia** (Appetite by Random House, 2012) at Amazon (\$18; see above).

Classic

If you are traveling in New York City, order the egg foo yung at **Shun Lee Palace** (155 East 55th Street, New York 10022; 212/371-8844; shunleepalace.com); **Shun Lee West** (43 West 65th Street, New York, New York 10023; 212/595-8895; shunleewest.com); and when visiting Massachusetts, stop by

Golden Temple (1651 Beacon Street, Brookline; 617/277-9722; goldentemplebrookline.com). To make the egg foo yung recipe (see [page 32](#)), use **Kikkoman oyster sauce**, available from Whole Foods Markets across the country (wholefoods.com).

Georgia

To purchase our favorite wines for pairing with Georgian food (see [page 69](#)), contact Chris Terrell at Terrell Wines (510/717-4829; terrellwines.com). To prepare the fried eggplant with walnut sauce recipe (see [page 74](#)), purchase **ground fenugreek**, available from Kalustyan's (\$6 for a 3-ounce bag; 800/352-3451; kalustyans.com). To make the beets in tart cherry sauce recipe (see [page 75](#)), use **Dried Tart Cherries**, available from Bob's Red Mill (\$9 for an 8-ounce bag; 800/349-2173; bobsredmill.com). To prepare the veal and sour plum stew (see [page 75](#)), buy **Koon Chun Chinese Pickled Plums**, available from AsianSupermarket365.com (\$5 for a 12-ounce jar; 888/822-8910). To make the spinach and walnut salad recipe (see [page 75](#)), use **ground fenugreek** (see above).

New Orleans

To prepare many of the New Orleans recipes (see [pages 56–59](#)), you'll need a Creole seasoning blend. We recommend purchasing **Tony Chachere's Famous Creole Seasoning**, available from Cajun Grocer (\$2 for an 8-ounce bottle; 888/272-9347; cajungrocer.com) or **Zatarain's Creole Seasoning**, available from Zatarain's (\$2 for an 8-ounce bottle; 630/343-0240; zatarains.elsstore.com). To prepare the Brennan's bananas Foster recipe (see [page 56](#)), use **Bols Creme de Bananes**, available on Amazon (\$12 for a one liter bottle; amazon.com). To prepare the Brennan's Eggs Hussarde (see [page 56](#)), purchase **Reese Holland Rusk Crisp Toast**, available on Amazon (\$11 for two 3.5-ounce packages; see above). To prepare the Brennan's turtle soup recipe (see [page 56](#)), buy **boneless turtle meat**, available from buyexoticmeats.com (\$25 for a 1-pound box; 800/806-1172). To prepare the Cajun crawfish étouffée recipe (see [page 56](#)), use **parcooked frozen and peeled crawfish tails**, available from Cajun Grocer (\$19 for a 1-pound box). To make the Commander's Palace Shrimp & Tasso Henican recipe (see [page 58](#)), purchase **Comeaux's Smoked Pork Tasso** and **Old Homestead's Cajun Pickled Okra**, both available from Cajun Grocer (\$9 for a 1-pound bag/\$6 for a 12-ounce jar; see above). To prepare the Creole sea-

food boil (see [page 58](#)), purchase **live crawfish** or **seasoned boiled and frozen crawfish**, available from Cajun Grocer (prices vary by season/\$15 for a 3-pound box; see above). To make the Galatoire's Oysters Rockefeller recipe (see [page 59](#)), use **Pernod**, available from Red, White, and Green Wine & Spirits (\$37 for a 750-ml bottle; 718/302-4080; rwgwines.com). To prepare the Upperline's spicy P&J oysters St. Claude recipe (see [page 59](#)), purchase **whole grain corn flour** or **gluten free corn flour**, available from Bob's Red Mill (\$3 for a 24-ounce bag/\$3.49; see above).

Kitchen

To make the Arnaud's café brûlot recipe (see [page 80](#)), buy **Bols Orange Curaçao**, available from Astor Wines and Spirits (\$17 for a 1-liter bottle; 212/674-7500; astorwines.com), and **St. Remy Napoleon VSOP Brandy** at Total Wine & More (\$12 for a 750-ml bottle; 855/330-6673; totalwine.com). To prepare the Arnaud's French 75 recipe (see [page 80](#)), purchase **Courvoisier VSOP**, available from Astor Wines and Spirits (\$47 for a 750-ml bottle) and **Moët & Chandon Brut Impérial Champagne**, available from Union Square Wines (\$50 for a 750-ml bottle; 212/675-8100; union-squarewines.com). To prepare the Commander's Palace Sazerac recipe (see [page 80](#)), purchase **Lucid absinthe**, available from Marketview Liquor (\$54.99 for a 750-ml bottle; 888/427-2480; marketviewliquor.com) and **Sazerac Rye Whiskey**, available from the Whiskey Place (\$40 for a 750-ml bottle; thewhiskeyplace.com). To make the Hotel Monteleone Vieux Carré recipe (see [page 80](#)), buy **Benedictine Liqueur**, available from New Hampshire Liquor and Wine Outlet (\$29 for a 750-ml bottle; 800/543-4664; liquorandwineoutlets.com). To make the Brennan's brandy milk punch recipe (see [page 80](#)), use **St. Remy Napoleon VSOP Brandy**, available from Westchester Wine Warehouse (\$21 for a 1-liter bottle; westchesterwine.com). To order our favorite Crescent City books, **The New Orleans Restaurant Cookbook** (Doubleday & Company, 1967), **Creole Feast** (Random House, 1978), **Lost Restaurants of New Orleans** (Gretna, 2012), **Galatoire's Cookbook** (Clarkson Potter, 2005), and **New Orleans: A Food Biography** (AltaMira, 2011), contact Bonnie Slotnick Cookbooks in New York (163 West Tenth Street; 212/989-8962; bonnieslotnickcookbooks.com) or search online at amazon.com.



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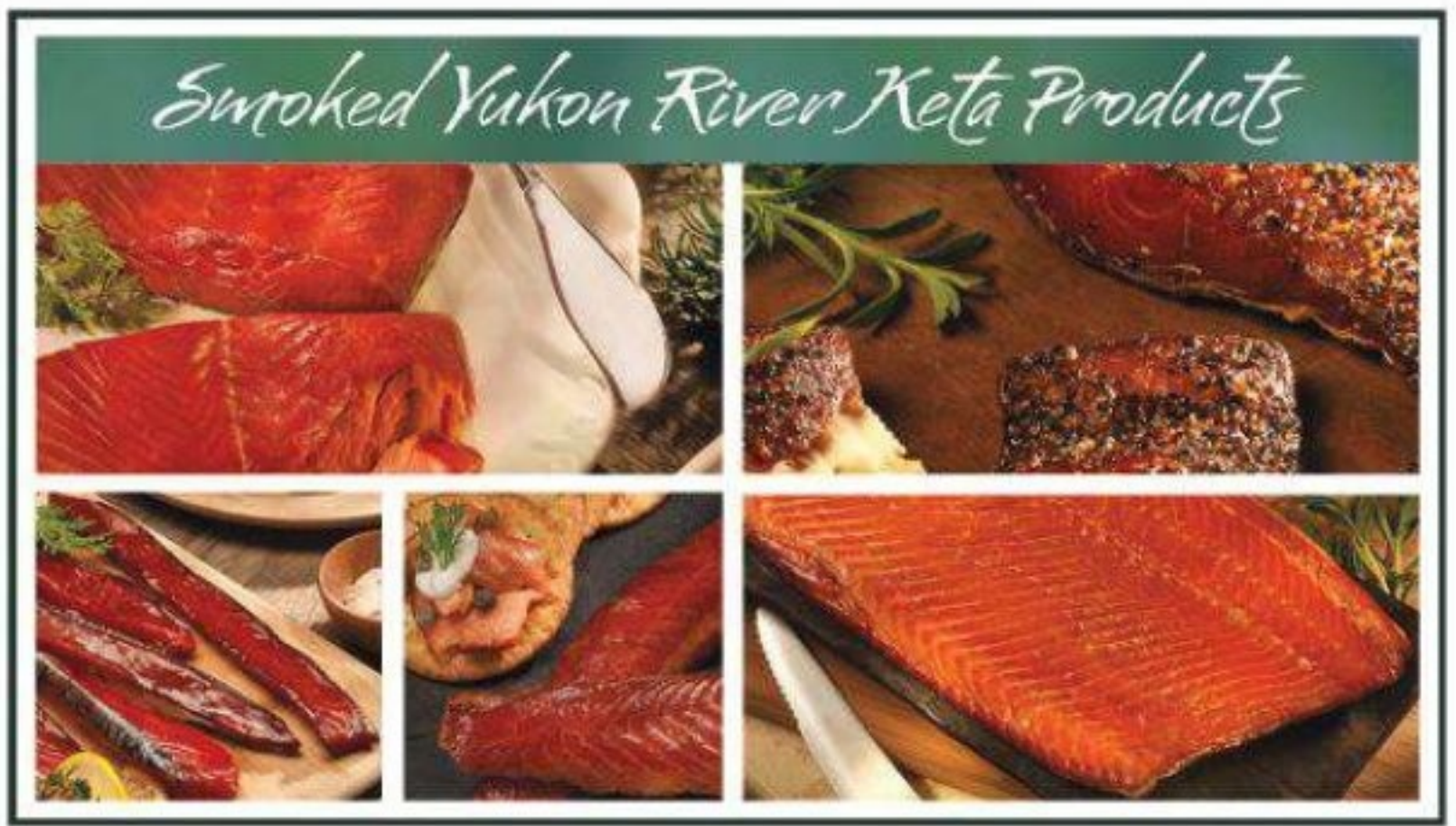
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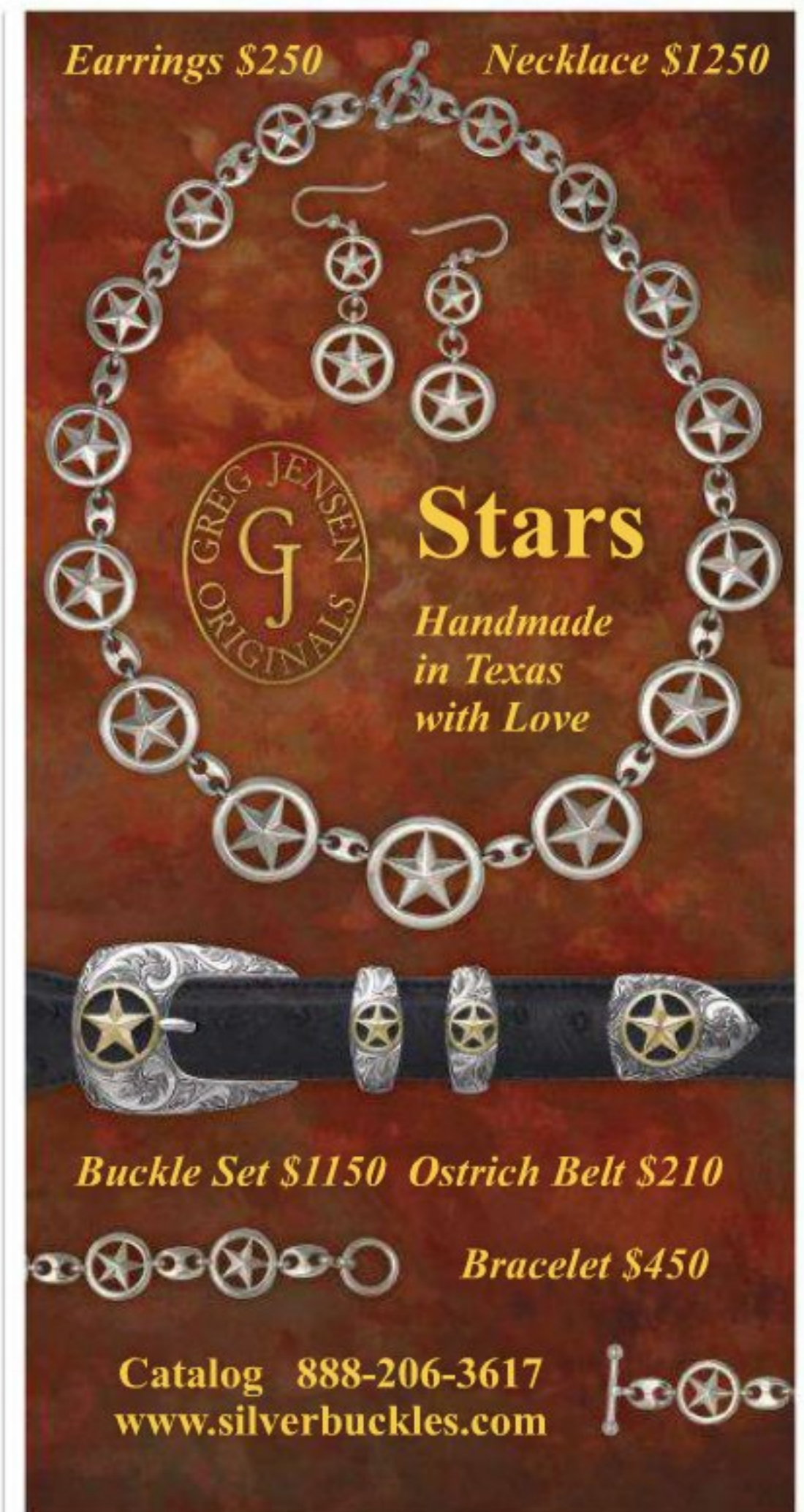
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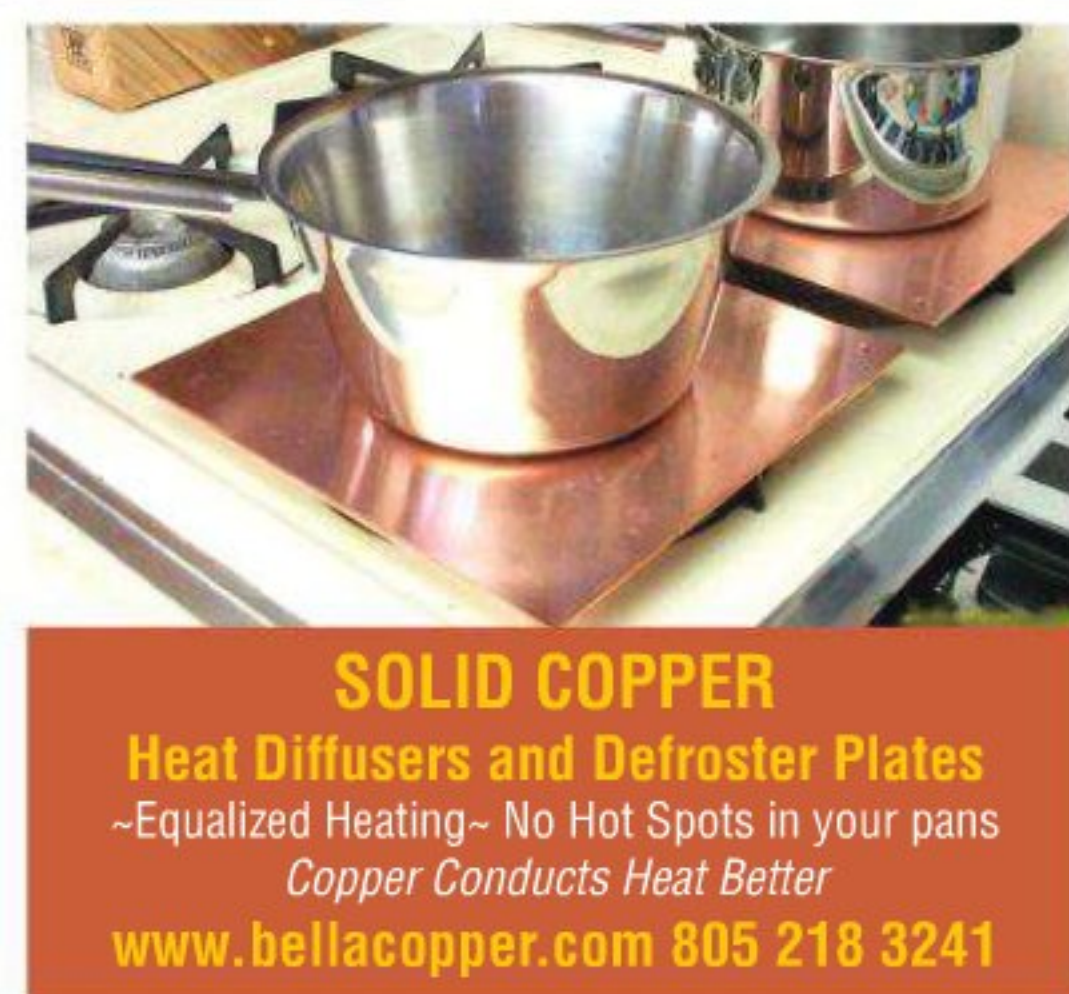
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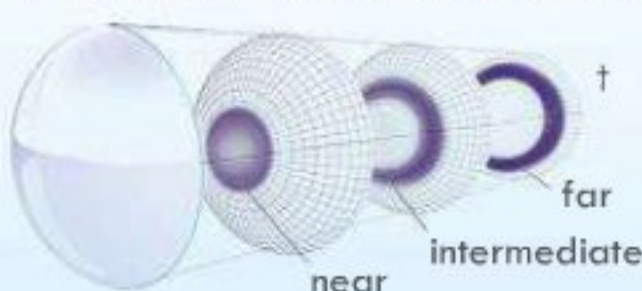
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